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THE FORCE IN STAR WARS GAMING

ISSUE NUMBER 1

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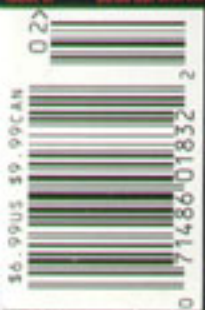
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Star Wars Official Web Site:
 <www.starwars.com>
Wizards of the Coast Star Wars Web Site:
 <www.wizards.com/starwars>
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 United Kingdom customers, please call +044-12-33-99 (in the U.K.) or +44-141-236-5205 (outside the U.K.), M-F 9.30 A.M.-6.30 P.M. London time.

SUBSCRIPTION QUESTIONS:
 Contact Publishers Creative Systems (PCS) at <swg@pcspublish.com> or call 1-800-395-7766.

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NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL DISTRIBUTION:
 Curtis Circulation Company
 730 River Road
 New Milford, NJ 07646
 Tel: 201-634-7400
 Fax: 201-634-7499

Printed in the U.S.A.

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Welcome to the first issue of *STAR WARS Gamer Magazine*. I'm Jeff Quick, Senior Editor and tour guide on this, your transport to the STAR WARS gaming galaxy. The two dashing rogues in the cockpit are Kyle Hunter, Art Director and Dug scoundrel, and Chris Perkins, Editor-in-Chief and Rodian linguistic savant. Our tour of the STAR WARS galaxy begins here, with this issue. We have the whole galaxy to cover, so we should get underway! We'll be visiting new planets, creatures, and characters. We'll even do a bit of time traveling to see what's happening in different eras, from the Old Republic to the New Jedi Order. There's a lot more going on than you might think! That's not to say you won't recognize the place: After all, it's still STAR WARS! We'll just be exploring parts of the galaxy you might not have seen before.

So what's great about this new magazine?

First, as the title would imply, it's devoted to STAR WARS games: computer games, console games, roleplaying games, card games, miniatures games... whatever we can turn up, as long as it's a game. From time to time, we'll even include some new, never-before-seen games like this issue's "Tatooine Grudge Match" Podracing Game on page 68.

Of course, one of the biggest games we'll cover is the brand new *STAR WARS Roleplaying Game* based on the new d20 Gaming System from Wizards of the Coast. We'll be presenting new adventures, creatures, ships, weapons, and more so you can play your own adventures in the STAR WARS universe.

We'll also have fiction by well-known authors and some new faces. In this issue we have stories by Steve Miller (former editor of the beloved *STAR WARS Adventure Journal*) and Daniel Wallace, a name familiar to more than a few of you, I'm sure. Down the line we'll have more big-name surprises, too.

And you, unknown freelancer, have a chance to contribute to the STAR WARS legacy. How? Go to our web site at www.wizards.com, click through to the *STAR WARS Gamer* site, and read our submission guidelines. Since everything we publish is approved by the fine folks at Lucasfilm (Hi Ben! Hi Lucy!), your work could expand the STAR WARS universe as we know it. And what do we want to see? Why, new things of course.

It's all so squeaky, shiny new, I can barely stand it. So, come aboard and help us chart the unknown reaches of the STAR WARS galaxy. Let us know what you think, either by filling out the survey in this issue or by writing us a letter (check out the Letters page for our address). If you're especially entertaining or thought-provoking, you might see your letter printed next issue!

Okay, enough perky editor talk. Get on with reading the magazine.

JEFF

Jeff Quick
 Senior Editor

STAR WARS ERA ICONOGRAPHY: ROLEPLAYING GAME



The Old Republic:
 25,000-1,000 years before
 Star Wars: A New Hope



The Rise of the Empire:
 1,000-0 years before
 Star Wars: A New Hope



The Rebellion:
 0-5 years after Star Wars:
 A New Hope



The New Republic:
 5-25 years after Star Wars:
 A New Hope



The New Jedi Order:
 25+ years after Star Wars:
 A New Hope

STAR WARS Gamer

THE FORCE IN STAR WARS GAMING

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ONE WITH THE
FORCE

THE GAMING
UNIVERSE

TECHNICAL
DATA

ALIEN
HORIZONS

ALTERNATE
DIMENSIONS



ON THE COVER

Pacific Northwest illustrator Martin French gives us a new look at Boba Fett. Why feature Fett on our first issue? *Duh*—as if you didn't think he was coolest dude this side of a Sarlaac Pit!

FORCE FEEDBACK



"I felt a great disturbance in the Force... as if millions of voices suddenly cried out..."

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Darth Mail:

Drop Out of Hyperspace and Send Us a Transmission

So, here's the shiny first issue letter column. Because the buzz has been so high on this magazine, we've already gotten plenty of mail. This is good, and I commend every one of you who have written. Thank you all.

But it's not enough. I want more. Always more with me. It's like an obsession. I want a rancor pit full of mail. I want to swim in mail. Wouldn't that be great? I think so.

But only YOU can help me fulfill my dream. Send me letters about this first issue. Tell me what you like and dislike (about the magazine). Tell me your hopes and dreams (for the magazine). Tell me your deepest fears (concerning the magazine only, please).

All the contact info you need is next to C-3PO's head. Here then, is your assignment: Read this magazine. Write a letter or email about your experiences. Send it to us.

Now. On with the letters.

Jeff Q.
Your Humble Editor

Get Out Of My Brain!

Greetings,
I think the [magazine] should focus on the RPG aspects of STAR WARS, with articles and scenarios about the game, features on new planets, races, equipment, ships, and so forth for use therein. I'd particularly like to see articles addressing the "how-to" of setting up a coherent campaign within the STAR WARS universe aimed primarily at the Gamemaster, and background material that can be used by players and Gamemaster alike to become more familiar with the universe in which they operate.

I would also like to see material from the Imperial viewpoint, allowing games "from the other side"—where the players represent Imperial forces hunting down those pesky Rebels!

On time frame: equal measures for the 3 eras mentioned plus others (I personally prefer the "Empire at its height" period).

Print fiction in small measure at most, as there's plenty available for this particular genre already! Don't bother with CCGs

or computer/electronic games. Or at least if you do, there will be some pages left unread in my copy.

Megan Robertson
Regional Director,
Cheshire & Staffordshire, RPGA UK

Okay Megan, for RPG material, you'll love us. It's like you've been sitting in on our editorial meetings. You'll get your wish for RPG stuff.

But, I know many people will disagree with you on the fiction point. We're rather fond of it. We won't overwhelm you with fiction, but you'll notice it's there.

And although it pains me to know that you won't read certain parts of the magazine, we will indeed cover the STAR WARS CCG and electronic games. We're serious about being a STAR WARS game magazine, not just an RPG magazine (though naturally, we favor the RPG).



In the Cards

Dear *STAR WARS Gamer*,
You've got to get with Decipher and include the CCG! Only by covering ALL of the game forums will you reach all *STAR WARS* fans. I'm sure it will help you reach a larger audience. Besides, I think connecting the CCG and RPG will increase the excitement for both!

I'm looking forward to your magazine!

Thanks,
Paul Lansdowne
via email

Even as we speak, our Crack Team of Negotiators (i.e. Chris Perkins) is in high-level talks with Decipher about getting more *STAR WARS* CCG coverage. Our Crack Team is also talking to other companies about other *STAR WARS* games which are so cool that I must wear a shawl at the office. More as it develops.

Tales From Back In The Day....

Hello there,
I wanted to suggest that Wizards of the Coast's new *STAR WARS* products also explore the era known as the "Tales of the Jedi." It is a very colorful and distinct epoch from any of the others.

Best,
Abel Pena
via email

We haven't heard much about this era yet, so we might be able to arrange that.

Pulp Fiction

Dear *STAR WARS Gamer*,
I am a new young author (16 years of age) and I am interested in writing new short

STAR WARS fiction for your magazine. Below I have listed possible titles and a brief descriptive paragraph about each story I wish to write. I hope you like what you read. Thank you for your time.

James Thomas
Chesapeake, VA

This is an example of a lot of letters we get here at *Gamer*. We actually did get this letter, but if you are not James, think of James as a metaphor for all you writer hopefuls in our audience.

Our contract with Lucasfilm requires that we use only fiction authors with previous publication credits. I know this grieves many of you, but we have only your best interests at heart. This policy helps preserve the quality of fiction you receive as a reader, and helps us because it clears up time in our days to sharpen the magazine. Believe me when I tell you, my goal is naught but to bring you a better magazine.

Sabacc 'n' Roll

Dear *Gamer*,
[I want to see] as much RPG content as possible: stats, Gamemaster tools, new info, not posters and interviews. We don't need another fan magazine.

One thing that would also be cool would be the rules for playing sabacc and maybe scannable/photocopiable/ cut-out sabacc cards. Later magazines could include rule variants as mentioned in various books (Sabacc Solitaire, Jabba's Palace Sabacc, Cloud City Casino Sabacc, Random Sabacc, Dune Sea Sabacc, Ecclessis Figg Variation, etc.) and non-standard cards also mentioned (Chance, Hazard, the Satellite, The Wheel, and The Damaged Starship, among others).

It would be a lot more fun in an RPG to

actually play the games sometimes rather than just making skill checks. Of course there would have to be various options that would let Gamemasters control certain aspects of the game, but it would also be good as a stand-alone, to be played outside of the RPG.

Richard James Scott
Cramlington
Northumberland
United Kingdom

Yeah, I agree. Sabacc info would be cool. What with me being editor and all, though, it would look bad if I wrote EVERYTHING. Anybody want to take a crack at this? I see a couple of good article ideas here. Anyone? You know where to find me.

Straight to the Source

Hi Wizards,
I want to [give] you some ideas for your upcoming game. I won't bother you with rules or rule ideas, but some words about sourcebooks. Many sourcebooks cover nice stories, useless information, and tons of material no one wants to know. So please

Next Issue: Flighty Types

Pilots, scoundrels, and pirates gather to help you fly casual.

- Fiction: "A Credit For Your Thoughts" by Chris Cassidy and Tish Pahl. The story behind the partnership of Fen Nabon and Gitsa Dogder, revealed for the first time!
- Steal an Imperial shuttle? Don't mind if I do! "The Lambda Heist," an adventure by Peter Schweighofer.
- For the RPG: Climactic Encounters to help GMs make games more cinematic.
- New Corellian freighters for your heroes to trash.
- What's in that crate? Find out with the spectacular Random Cargo Generator.

... And More!



don't make these mistakes. Sourcebooks have to be helpful.

Some things worth being in a sourcebook would be:

1) Describe vehicles with maps and necessary information. It's fine to know that your characters are in a Rebel frigate, but where the heck is the bridge, sick bay, or engineering? This would be really useful, especially for combat and boarding actions. Please cover from small crafts to Star Destroyers; it helps create more atmosphere and realism.

2) Explain how some technologies work. It's fine to know what a repulsorlift is, but to know how it works (not too realistically... hey, it's STAR WARS) is very useful and adds to the atmosphere of the game. Also things

like ship IDs and the galactic Holonet are important things to know about.

3) Explain mechanisms of the universe. For example, when a ship approaches a planet, how do local authorities react? How are newcomers welcomed?

4) For smuggler or trader campaigns it would be great to have price lists for goods/per ton of load and where these are best to buy and to sell.

If you would add some these ideas to your products it would greatly increase playability and usefulness as well as sales. I wish you the best for your STAR WARS RPG.

Best wishes and thanks sincerely,
Peter Biedermann
via email

Even though Peter directed his ideas toward sourcebooks, he's also dead-on about the kinds of things we want to put in *Gamer*. We'll be bringing you nuts and bolts ways to play STAR WARS games better! So Peter, look to *Gamer* to fulfill your detail jones.

That's all the room we have this issue, so read the magazine and get busy with your own letter writing. Please remember, we're not above bribery to get you to write letters. May the force be with you! 



Imperial Dispatch: The Crime Lord

Corrections and Clarifications from the Star Wars RPG

Despite best efforts, errors slip through the proofreading process of most roleplaying games. Often, Wizards of the Coast editors catch errors after a book has gone to the printer, but before it gets to you. This is the time when the most hair is lost in the RPG R&D department. However, thanks to the timeliness of modern publishing, we can get updates to you at blazingly bimonthly speeds. This issue, we have errata from the *STAR WARS Roleplaying Game*. Table 12-5: the Crimelord is incorrect. The corrected Table 12-5 is at right, with explanatory text. We think Jabba would have laughed with minimal derision.

Table 12-5: The Crime Lord

LEVEL	BASE ATTACK BONUS	FORT SAVE	REFLEX SAVE	REFLEX SAVE	SPECIAL	DEFENSE BONUS	REPUTATION GAIN
1st	+0	+0	+1	+2	Contact	+1	+1
2nd	+1	+0	+2	+3	Resource access	+2	+1
3rd	+1	+1	+2	+3	Inspire fear -2	+2	+0
4th	+2	+1	+2	+4	Contact	+2	+1
5th	+2	+1	+3	+4	Minions	+3	+1
6th	+3	+2	+3	+5	Inspire fear -4	+3	+0
7th	+3	+2	+4	+5	Contact	+4	+1
8th	+4	+2	+4	+6	Exceptional minions	+4	+1
9th	+4	+3	+4	+6	Inspire fear -6	+4	+0
10th	+5	+3	+5	+7	Contact	+5	+1

CONTACT: The crime lord has operatives and associates throughout his or her sphere of influence. Each time a crime lord gains a contact, the GM should develop a supporting character to represent the contact. A player can suggest the type of contact his or her character wants to gain. A contact won't accompany the crime lord on missions or risk his or her life, but will provide information or expert skills. The more powerful the contact is, the less time he or she has to offer the crime lord. Whatever the case, a crime lord shouldn't be allowed to call on the same contact more than once per adventure. Contacts fall into two groups: information contacts and expert contacts.

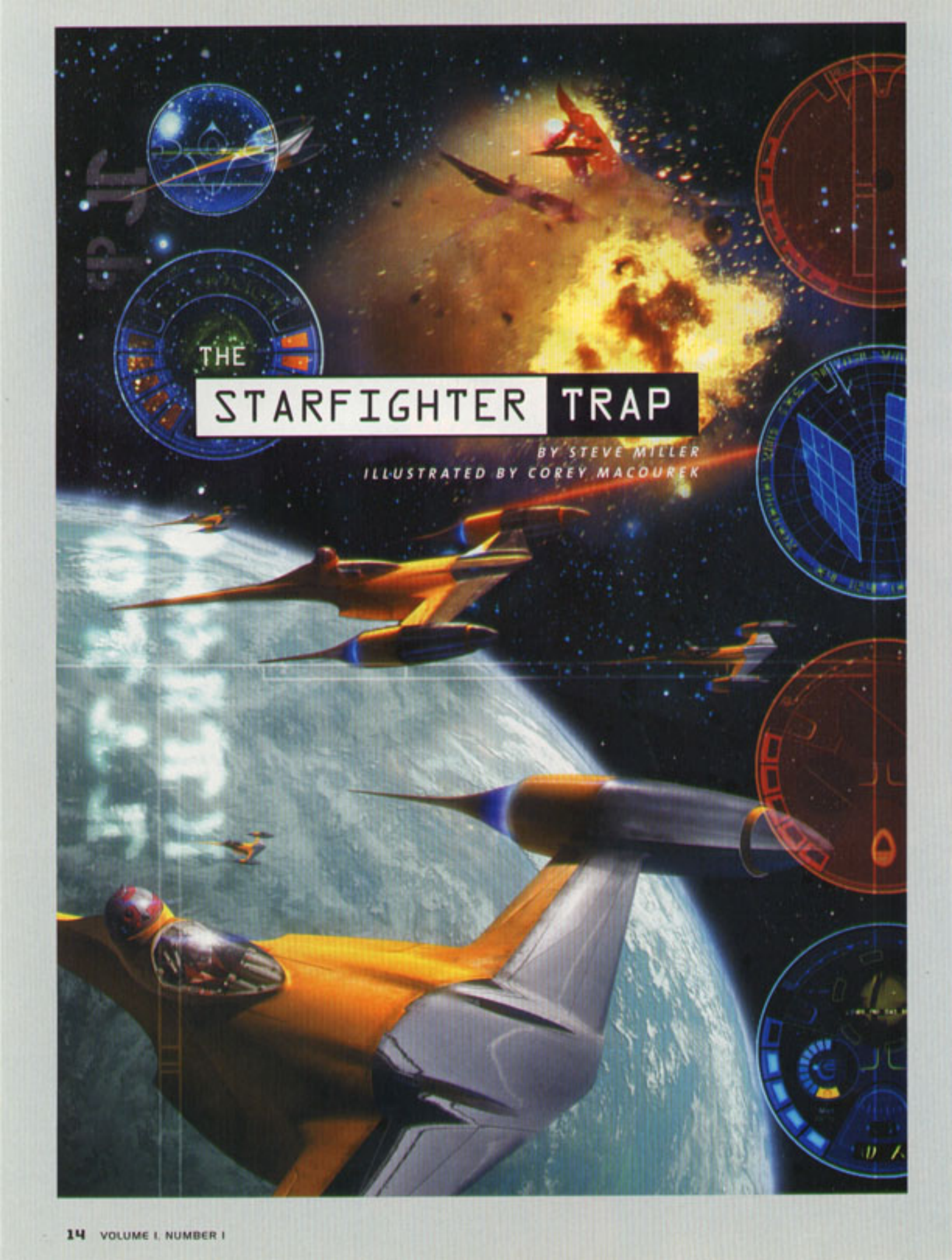
Information contacts include bartenders, thugs, spacers, law enforcers, outlaws, entertainers, computer slicers,

merchants, politicians, smugglers, officers, starship captains, reporters, and various types of street people of any species.

Expert contacts include bureaucrats, doctors, engineers, diplomats, historians, mechanics, various types of scholars and scientists, politicians, and bounty hunters.

INSPIRE FEAR: Beginning at 3rd level, the crime lord's infamy and reputation reach a level that anyone of the same character level or lower has trouble taking direct actions against the crime lord. This results in a penalty to any actions made to directly effect the crime lord, including attacks, skill checks in opposition to the crime lord, and Force-based skill uses. The penalty is -2 at 3rd level, -4 at 6th level, and -6 at 9th level.





THE

STARFIGHTER TRAP

BY STEVE MILLER

ILLUSTRATED BY COREY MACOUREK



THE PALACE ALWAYS SEEMED TO FALL INTO A SLUMBER when Queen Amidala was away. Most of the government officials and administrators stayed tucked away in their offices, hoping to get as much datawork off their desks as possible during these quiet times.

The Royal Naboo Security Force administrative offices were almost completely deserted, the Security Officers using the Queen's absence to work on overdue offworld projects or tend to personal business and family responsibilities. Only Essara Till, flight instructor and member of Naboo's elite Bravo Flight, was working at her desk.

For Essara, times like this provided the perfect opportunity to review applications to join Naboo's Starfighter Corps, review maintenance logs and expense reports, and to clear even less agreeable datawork off her desk and the desk of her immediate superior, Bravo Flight's leader and Queen Amidala's personal pilot, Ric Olié.

The only sound coming from beyond her office all morning was the distant buzz of the young on-call pilots of Echo Flight conversing in their ready room, so the echo of approaching footsteps broke her concentration. When she realized the sounds were nearing her office, she straightened up and realized how sore her neck was. A glance at the chronometer on the wall told her she'd been hunched over her desk for three solid hours.

The lanky frame of Essara's wingman, Dren Melne, appeared in the office doorway. "Hi, sweetheart," he said.

"That's Flight Leader Sweetheart," she replied with a grin. "With Olié offworld, I'm top veermok. Don't you forget it."

"A top veermok who spends most of her time doing secretarial duties or playing nursemaid," Dren said as he approached her desk.

"We all serve Naboo in different ways," Essara told him, leaning back in her chair and stretching. "How are the troops?"

"Echo Flight is eagerly studying up on their fighters, hoping that we'll lead them to glory and a chance to fly the N-1s." He looked down at her with a slight frown. "Ric really shouldn't waste your talents like this. It's foolish to make his best pilot handle datawork and babysit. Don't tell me you aren't bored stiff."

"If it weren't me doing the expense reports, it would be Ric," she replied.

"Better him than you. You're one of the best pilots in Bravo Flight."

"Your bias is showing." She reached up and gently touched his cheek, smiling as she looked into his eyes. Like her, Dren had spent several years away from Naboo working as a fighter pilot. The two of them had never crossed paths offworld, but when they met after his return to Naboo a little over a year ago, their common experience had fostered an unexpected friendship. In recent months, that friendship had become something more. "Like I told you, Ric doesn't make me do this, I asked to do this. Plus, this way, you and I get to spend some quiet time together."

He took her hand and kissed it. "Maybe. On the other hand, there's a way we can have both."

"Why don't I finish this report, and then we can rent a couple of aircars and head into the mountains for a picnic?"

"I was thinking of something more permanent," he replied. "Remember the governor of the Agamar system and the fighter contingent he's trying to assemble?"

Essara's smile faded. She drew her hand back. "Yes. I told you, I'm not interested."

Dren rolled his eyes and reached for the silver starfighter model on her desk. "Essara, come on! You're wasted here! On Agamar—"

"I'm not interested in mercenary work," she interrupted. "Not any more. I'm on Naboo to stay, and if that means datawork and leading Echo training missions, I can live with that. I've retired from that life, and I like it this way."

"Don't get mad." He put the model down and reached for her hand, but she withdrew it and picked up a datapad. He sighed softly. "Promise me you'll give it some thought?"

Essara leaned back in her chair and threw an exasperated look at the ceiling. "What is it with you and Agamar?!" she exclaimed, fixing her eyes on his again. "It's not like you have fr—"

An alarm blared, filling the office. "All pilots to the briefing room. This is a Class One Emergency," a voice echoed. "I repeat, all pilots to the briefing room."

Essara snapped to her feet. "Get your gear. I'll see you in the briefing room."

"Think about Agamar," Dren said as he turned and ran from the room.

Essara shook her head, scowling with irritation at Dren, the pain in her neck, and the interruption. She opened the locker in the far corner of the office. Her orange flight jacket hung below her helmet and her holstered sidearm with the belt curled around it. She grabbed her gear, pausing briefly to look at the empty hook with Olié's name above it. "I'm happy doing the datawork," she muttered, putting on her helmet.

As Essara and Dren entered the pilots' briefing room, a Royal Security Officer activated the holopod at the front of the chamber. To Essara's surprise, Sio Bibble, the Governor of Theed and the head of the Royal Advisory Council, was standing a few paces behind the Security Officer, looking impatient.

"Governor Bibble," Essara said, saluting. "This is not a drill, then?"

"No," Bibble replied. His brow furrowed. "This could be a grave situation indeed."

Echo Flight's pilots began to pour into the room with a din of excited conversation and a clatter of equipment. "Echo Flight present and accounted for," Dren said, bringing up the rear.

"The remains of Bravo Flight reporting for duty," Essara said, offering the governor another salute. "Lieutenant Melne and I will command Echo Flight today."

"Fourteen minutes ago, we received a distress call from Station TFP-9," the Security Officer said. The holopod projected a flickering three-dimensional image of the space station at the edge of the Naboo system. It was roughly egg-shaped with a series of docking arrays and refueling ports along its wider extremis.

A Corellian freighter was docked at each of two of the refueling ports. As the image

rotated, Essara could see the elongated profile of a Sullustan-designed capital ship. "The station is under attack by a Hornet-class carrier and a squadron of Z-95 Headhunters."

A buzz of conversation erupted among the Echo pilots. Their voices held a mixture of excitement and fear.

"Quiet," Essara said. The voices fell silent, and all eyes fixed on the image of the station.

"TFP-g is almost defenseless," the Security Officer continued, offering Essara a slight nod. "Station engineers are still upgrading their point defense weapons systems, so its only defenses are its shields and a pair of stock YT-1250 freighters. I'm sure you can see these are no match for Headhunters. Echo Flight will launch immediately and defend the station. Bravo Flight will lead the mission. Once the raiders have been chased off, a portion of Echo Flight chosen by Flight Leader Till will remain at TFP-g until their defenses are back online. Questions?"

"Yes sir," said Echo Five, a young man named Rhys who had just recently

joined the team. "A TaggeCo Purchasing Agent in Oxon once bragged he could buy the whole Naboo system with his personal expense account. Why don't we just get him to pay off these pirates?"

"Stow it, soldier," Essara snapped. She noticed Dren give the Echo Five a wink and a nudge with his elbow.

"Sir, I have a question," Echo Eight said in a soft voice. She was a young girl, about sixteen years old, who barely filled her uniform.

The Security Officer nodded at her.

"What kind of Headhunters are those? Standard Z-95s or AF-series?"

The Security Officer looked momentarily perplexed and glanced at Bravo Flight leader, who was standing next to him.

"The sensors on the TFP refueling platform aren't fine enough to distinguish between the different types of Headhunters," Essara said. "Pirates are more likely to have Mark Is, though."

"Yes, of course." The Security Officer tried to sound authoritative, but his cheeks were turning red. "That's all the data we have."

"May the Force protect you and the good people of TFP-g," Governor Bibble stated.

"Echo Flight, to your fighters," Dren called. "Prepare to launch!"

"Yes, sir!" The pilots rushed from the room.

Essara followed her pilots down the dimly lit tunnel to the palace hangar, reminding herself to make sure every Security Officer was supplied with the latest technical data on the current generation of Headhunters.

Essara understood why Dren and other "professionals" who had returned home sometimes got frustrated with the Royal Naboo Security Force. Everyone in the Royal Naboo Defense Force was dedicated to Naboo, but most of them lacked the combat experience and mercenary connections that Essara and a handful of others possessed. It was not uncommon for the ignorant to lead the inexperienced in the Naboo's volunteer defense force,

but that situation would only change if more seasoned soldiers would impart their experience to the rest. They were living in dangerous times, yet few on Naboo bothered to take notice.

Had she ever voiced that sentiment to Dren? Maybe that was the argument that would make him see things her way. Of late, their conversations turned into arguments over whether it was worthwhile for dedicated soldiers to serve in the Royal Naboo Security Force. Dren was clearly unhappy on Naboo, and in darker, quieter moments, Essara wondered if she would have to choose between him and the world she loved.

We'll go on that picnic when this mission's over, she promised herself as she entered the hangar. I'll explain how vital we are to Naboo, how much she needs us. I won't lose my temper, I swear.

Most of Echo Flight were already in their fighters, and the astromech droids were moving the ships into take-off positions. Dren's and Essara's fighters stood out among them, the gleaming chromium and yellow hull plating contrasting the blue Echo Flight fighters.

Essara vaulted into the cockpit of her fighter. She plugged her helmet into the comm system. The R2 unit slid the canopy shut and issued the familiar "ALL SYSTEMS GO"

I'll explain how vital we are to Naboo, how much she needs us. I won't lose my temper, I swear.

series of beeps and whistles. She double-checked the status indicators. The R2 model was a vast improvement over other astromech droids she had worked with, but she still felt compelled to make sure the droid wasn't overlooking something. All flight systems appeared ready, so she surrendered control of her fighter to Launch Control and double-checked the power allocations of her weapons systems and shields.

I KNOW WHAT I'M DOING, FLIGHT LEADER, scrolled across the astromech droid interface screen.

"I know, I know," Essara replied on the internal comlink. She checked the droid's identity. They had given her R2-L1 again, a droid she'd nicknamed "Ell-one." There was a persistent glitch in its personality subroutines that made the unit atypically arrogant and self-assured. "It's a habit."

UNDERSTANDABLE. IT'S A HABIT YOU SHOULD BREAK. IT MAKES YOU LESS EFFICIENT.

"Bravo Seven to Echo Flight," Essara said into her comlink, ignoring the rest of the droid's comments. "You know the drill. Launch Control will guide you to the combat zone and relinquish control to you when we're within sensor range of the enemy. Make sure your astromech droids have loaded your first proton torpedoes by the time we arrive, and double-check the power allotment to your shields and laser cannons. We're going to need firepower and shields more than speed against those Headhunters. Assume Attack Pattern Zeta-Gamma One as soon as control is surrendered. Sound off, Echo and Bravo Flights."

As Launch Control taxied the fighters to the broad opening of the hangar bay, the pilots checked in one by one. Essara heard Dren's voice first, followed by the pilots of Echo Flight, some of whom sounded too young to drive a speeder, let alone fly a starfighter.

"This is going to be like sailing on Lake Paonga in midsummer, Flight Leader," Echo Five declared over the comlink. "Even if the

raiders have Headhunters AF-3s, our ships can take them in a one-to-one match any day!"

"You think?" asked Echo One.

"I studied up on Headhunters after Essara told us the basics," Echo Five said confidently. "They're really far better suited as atmospheric defense craft, no matter what SubPro's marketing claims. We've got better shields, greater range on our weapons due to the superior stabilizing fields in our laser arrays, and better maneuverability and speed because our Nubian drives. This should be over quick."

"Don't be too confident," Essara broke in. "The starfighter is less than half of the equation. I spent one year in a Z-95 AF-3 prototype and two years in the real thing. If those pilots are any good, your pups are going to need everything your ships can give you."

"Maybe so, Flight Leader," Echo Five replied. "But wouldn't you say—"

"You're too chatty, Echo Five," Dren interjected. "Let's not give the bad guys any more warning than we have to. Maintain communications silence until Launch Control disengages the auto pilot."

"Sharp kid that Echo Five," Dren's voice came. A blinking light on Essara's instrument panel indicated he was using the short-range, tight-beam channel reserved for broadcasts between members of a starfighter element. "If he can fly as well as he talks, he'll have your job eventually."

She switched to the same channel. "Good. That way I can retire to a cottage in the mountains."

Dren laughed. "I can't see you there for long. You're like the rest of us pros. You've got rocket fuel in your blood."

You've got rocket fuel in your blood. That was a favorite cliché among starfighter pilots, a neat shorthand to explain their love for speed and danger beyond anything else in life. All of the trappings of a so-called normal life—family, money, and even love—were secondary or absent in the cockpit.

In her late teens, Essara found Naboo's educational focus on the arts and philosophy tiresome. She felt her talent for tactics and excellent reflexes were being wasted and even stifled. She started refusing to take part in the weekly choral performances she'd been involved with since age nine, and eventually turned her back on Naboo entirely. On the eve of her nineteenth birthday, she had said goodbye to her parents and set out for the great unknown beyond her homeworld.

The first several years were a series of tremendous adventures, the entire galaxy seeming to unfold before her. Later, she discovered, with some dismay, that the stars she had tracked in the skies over her home hid chaos and ruthlessness unknown to the Naboo.

She strove to keep herself clean of the infectious sickness of self-centered greed that seemed to motivate most of the beings she dealt with off of Naboo, but in doing so, she must have thinned that rocket fuel in her veins.

Two years ago, she was working under contract with the Garqi Agricultural Combine. She was protecting yet another convoy from raiders when she realized she was homesick and bored. As the battered pirate fighters scattered before her and her wingman, she felt the first sudden twinge of longing for Naboo's rolling hills, and she realized that starfighting had become routine—like afternoon meals. When did she begin to lose the thrill? She couldn't say, but it vanished completely in that battle.

Essara worked out her contract and returned home to Naboo.

All the things that had caused her flee Naboo were suddenly more desirable. She was still amazed at how much pleasure she derived from riding a tusk-cat through the lowlands and camping under the stars on the shores of a brilliant blue lake. When old friends asked her to sing with them, she jumped at the chance. Granted, her voice was no longer a finely tuned instrument, but she had not felt as much a part of something in over a decade.

When Ric Olié asked her to join Naboo's volunteer starfighter defense force, she jumped at the chance. She was quickly inducted into the elite Bravo Flight and used her vast offworld experience to provide better training for the young pilots of Echo and Delta Flight, the entry points into the Royal Space Fighter Corps. In her thirteen years as a fighter pilot for hire, she had never felt so vital and significant. Her homeworld needed her.

However, she longed for the day when Naboo wouldn't need her. Although her parents were respected and famous leaders on-world, Essara no longer felt she had anything to prove. She had already led a successful life apart from them. Even though she was just thirty-five, she felt ready to retire to a peaceful life in the mountains. But first she had to make sure the wide-eyed Naboo patriots that would be protecting her knew how dangerous the galaxy was outside their home system. She wouldn't be able to sleep at night knowing the skies were being guarded by some kid who might think he could reason with pirates and shipjackers.

Dren chuckled at her when she mentioned retreating to a mountain cottage, but settling down seemed right. Maybe she was getting old. Maybe she had just finally grown up. Whatever the case, she was going to discuss it with him earnestly after this mission.

Essara's headset filled with beeps and whistles.

ENEMY WITHIN SENSOR RANGE, scrolled across her screen.

Essara made a quick check of the tactical display. Her control panel showed that enemy craft were turning from TFP-9 to engage her team. A single Corellian freighter floated immobile between the station and the enemy carrier, but there was no sign of the second freighter. Either the crew had successfully escaped or had already been killed by the raiders.

Echo Flight was more than capable of handling this engagement, and Essara was certain that the Naboo Police Cruisers would humble the Z-95s. Her scanner confirmed only that the enemy flew either basic Headhunters or Mark IIs, neither of which were as maneuverable or fast as the N-1 or the Police Cruiser. The Z-95s lacked shields strong enough to deflect the yield of the Naboo proton torpedoes, although the AF-3 model's heavily reinforced canopy would probably protect the enemy pilot. Conversely, it would take some very well placed shots or several Z-95s firing on a single Naboo starfighter to penetrate its shields.

The Naboo government and its shipyards invested as much time and money in the construction of a single starfighter as many other planetary governments invested in entire fighter squadrons. Both the Police Cruiser and the N-1s were dream fighters as far as Essara was concerned. Pilots who lacked experience were supported by astromech droids and superior sensor and targeting systems, while veterans such as she could avail themselves of the enhanced maneuverability provided by the finely calibrated engines.

With some annoyance, Essara found her thoughts drifting back to Dren. Not

even the excitement generated by the N-1 was enough to keep him from looking to the stars and dreaming about mercenary life. Dren kept bringing up Agamar. What was Dren's obsession with that backwater corner of the Outer Rim? He had no family or friends there. The Agamar starfighters were flying scrap-heaps that couldn't match force with the slowest Headhunters, let alone the N-1s. Did he need money? Could it be that he was finding it hard to make ends meet? If so, Essara had seen no evidence of this.

Whenever Essara daydreamed about her cottage, Dren was right there with her. She also dreamed of a little girl—their child. If money was really at the root of his restlessness, that problem was easily solved. She had more than enough money for both of them, and she wasn't going to let something as silly as credits get between them. But she'd have to be careful about how she made that point. Fighter pilots, herself included, were stubborn and brimming with pride.

A message from her astromech scrolled across the translation interface readout. THEED FLIGHT CONTROL IS DEACTIVATING THE AUTOPILOT IN FIVE... FOUR... THREE... TWO... ONE. YOU NOW HAVE COMPLETE CONTROL OF YOUR STARFIGHTER, BRAVO SEVEN.

Essara rechecked the status indicators. All systems were green, and the astromech droid had already allocated power in the way she preferred—shields at 95%, laser cannons at 101%, and sublight propulsion at 104%.

"Glad you decided to do things my way, Ell-one," Essara said after muting her comlink. She and the droid had argued over power allocation before, during a particularly routine encounter that Essara could hardly remember.

IT IS ULTIMATELY YOUR DECISION, FLIGHT LEADER.

Essara switched her comlink to wide broadcast. "Z-95 Headhunters, this is Flight Leader Essara Till of the Naboo Royal Space Fighter Corps. Deactivate your shields and return to your carrier, or you will be fired upon."

THE STATION'S SHIELDS ARE GONE. THE ENEMY FIGHTERS RECEIVED YOUR BROADCAST, BUT THEY AREN'T RESPONDING.

The astromech droid wasn't completely accurate in its estimation. The Z-95's response was silent, if not subtle: Turning away from the battered space station, they rolled, fell into formation, and accelerated toward the approaching Naboo starfighters. They weren't going to let this happen the easy way.

Essara switched her frequency back to the tight-beam channel she shared with Dren. "I want to take some of these low-lives alive. Try to disable rather than destroy a couple, and I'll do the same."

"What about Echo Flight?" he asked.

"You and I can go at this with some finesse. I'm not sure they can pick their shots as well."

"I copy."

"Bravo Seven out." She switched to the frequency shared by all the Naboo starfighters and verified the Z-95's approach vector. "Echo Flight, this is Bravo Seven. Shields at full power. Go to attack speed. Engage targets at will. Let your astromechs worry about any damage to your starfighters and focus on flying and gunnery.

Whatever happens, stay with your wingman, and keep the bad guys off each other's tails."

"Copy," replied Echo Five. The rest of Essara's pilots checked in as she watched the fourteen green blips that represented her team converge with the eighteen red blips that represented the Z-95s. She drew a slow deep breath as she eased her fighter's throttle forward. Switching to the frequency she shared with Dren, she said, "Ell-one, lock on the fighter closest to me."

TARGET ACQUIRED. HE'S RETURNING THE FAVOR.

Dren matched her acceleration. Essara used her command readout to cycle through the telemetry on Echo Flight. They were all locking onto enemy fighters as well. So far, they were maintaining formation. *Not bad for a bunch of rookies*, she thought.

Quickly, she found herself staring down the boldest of the Z-95s. It was heading straight for her. The enemy starfighter opened fire, and the N-1 rocked slightly as the laser bolts impacted harmlessly on its shields.

SHIELDS AT 91 PERCENT AND RECHARGING, Ell-one reported as Essara and her enemy streaked past one another. Essara put her fighter into a wingover barrel roll and put herself on her foe's tail with such ease that she found herself shaking her head. "Too simple," she said. "We've got slow-witted pilots in basic Headhunters, Dren. They aren't even armed with missiles. Echo Flight could do this without us."

Her tactical display was a kaleidoscope of green and red blips, and flashes of cannon fire ignited the black, starry sky.

The Z-95 pilot weaved side to side in a frantic but futile attempt to get Essara off his tail. She carefully targeted the cowl that protected the Headhunter's primary power generator and squeezed the cannon's trigger. The Headhunter's shields survived the first volley, so she fired again. The other pilot started whipping back and forth, trying to shake her. "Sorry, friend. You're outgunned and outclassed."

Essara fired again. This time, her lasers sliced into the cowl, cracking it open. Sparks trailed from the power generator within as the Headhunter's pilot threw his craft into a spinning dive in one final attempt to shake his pursuer. Essara fired again, and the exposed generator burst into shrapnel that spun away from the fighter. The now-disabled Z-95 entered a wild tumble.

"That one's going to be fun for the Space Rescue Corps," Dren commented with a chuckle.

Essara reduced her speed slightly to take a close look at the Headhunter as she flew past it. The fighter was a solid orange color with no heraldry or other visible identification marks.

THE PILOT'S ALIVE BUT UNCONSCIOUS, Ell-one informed her.

"Hey, Dren, any idea who these guys might be?"

"Echo Five to Flight Leader," Essara heard before Dren responded. She switched comm frequencies.

"Bravo Seven here. Go ahead Echo Five."

"We've got the bad guys on the run, Flight Leader. Seven kills with only Echo Three, Echo Eight, and Echo Eleven taking damage. The rest of the Headhunters are retreating toward the carrier. Should we pursue?"

"Hey!" replied Echo One, who had the shrill voice of a teenaged girl. "I'm supposed to give the status report!"

"They teamed up on me," Echo Eight said. "How was I supposed to take three at once when Kammie couldn't hit even one?"

"I just got another one!" Echo Seven broke in. "You were right, Rhys! This is a piece of cake! Let's get them!"

Essara scowled. "Echo One and Echo Two, fall into formation with Bravo Seven. I want the rest of you to prevent the other Z-95s from reaching that carrier. Stay out of range of its weapons, though. If any of them get away, so be it."

"What about us?" Echo One asked.

"We're going after the carrier. Ready proton torpedoes."

"Yahoo!" Echo Two cried. "A cap ship! This is great!"

Dren's N-1 Starfighter dropped into formation next to hers. "Looks like Echo Five is going to have competition for your job," Dren said.

Essara nodded, smiling to herself. "This is not going to be easy, Echo One and Echo Two. Set your shields to maximum recharge, even if it means you have to reduce the recharge rate of your lasers. We're going to suffer heavy fire as we're going in. But keep your cool. Assume Attack Formation Zeta Nine."

Echo One and Echo

Two joined her and Dren in formation. Together they swung toward the slim profile of the carrier. "We're going in at a 65-degree vector," she said. "That should limit the number of cannons they can bring to bear. Stay in formation."

TORPEDOES READY.

Suddenly, another wave of blips appeared on Essara's tactical display: sixteen additional Headhunters were coming in behind them, from the direction of Naboo.

"Flight Leader," Echo One said, "my tactical computer is malfunctioning. A new bunch of Headhunters just appeared out of nowhere."

"Mine too," Echo Two said.

"That's no malfunction," Echo Nine commented. "We've got more incoming fighters."

"I see them," said Echo Five. "Where did they come from? Headhunters don't have hyperdrives, do they?"

"Let them come to you, Echo Flight," Essara said. Then another ship appeared on her tactical readout. To her surprise, it was another Hornet-class carrier. Well, at least the mystery of the Headhunters was solved, she thought. She asked the astromech, "Where did that second carrier come from?"

IT MUST BE USING BAFFLED SUBLIGHT DRIVES AND DAMPENED POWER SYSTEMS. SENSORS DIDN'T DETECT IT UNTIL IT RAISED ITS SHIELDS.

"What sort of petty space pirates have access to baffled drives?" Essara muttered, surprised by the astromech's analysis but realizing it was the only one that made sense.

PETTY SPACE PIRATES WHO AREN'T PETTY SPACE PIRATES.

A gravelly voice rose from the dark silence of space. "Naboo fighters, this is Captain Sorran of the carrier *Velumina*. Power down your ships and permit yourselves to be tractorbeamed onto one of our carriers. No harm will come to you. All we want are your starfighters."

On the tight-beam link to Dren, Essara asked, "Who are they?"

"The Naboo don't take direction from petty thieves and terrorists!" said Echo Five angrily.

"Captain Sorran, this is Bravo Flight Leader Essara Till. I suggest you recover your fighters and leave our territory at once. We will not be threatened."

More hostile vessels appeared on Essara's tactical readout: fifty small craft not even half the length of an N-1, launched by the first carrier. Her onboard computer did not recognize their configuration. "What did they just drop?"

UNCERTAIN. THE DESIGN DOES NOT MATCH ANY CONFIGURATION IN MY DATABASES.

Essara gasped as she watched the tiny ships accelerate. Within three seconds, they were traveling so fast that her scanners could not keep up with them. They blinked in and out of existence. To Dren, she said, "Have you ever seen anything so fast?"

Her droid, however, was the one who responded. BASED ON THEIR RAPID ACCELERATION, I CONCLUDE THEY'RE PILOTED BY DROIDS.

THERE ISN'T ROOM FOR A BIOLOGICAL PILOT WITH SUCH AN ENGINE CONFIGURATION.

"Echo Flight," Essara said. "Those fighters are

moving too fast to be effectively tracked. We'll need to rely on good old-fashioned gunnery skill to take them out."

"Surrender, Flight Leader," Sorran commanded. "You and your pilots cannot match skill with our special fighter element. Do you really think a starfighter is worth dying for?"

Essara felt her temper flaring. "Echo One, Echo Two, Bravo Eight. Attack Formation Beta-Zero. We'll take the fast-moving bogies. Echo Three through Echo Six, you deal with the Headhunters. The rest of you focus on those new fighters. Keep them in your sights and off each other's tails. Don't rely on your instrumentation."

Then she heard Dren's voice. "Remember that opportunity on Agamar I've been pressing you about? I didn't want to make you choose like this, but this is your last chance, because my term of employment starts now."

"Dren?" Essara looked to her left, just in time to see her wingman break formation, climbing sharply and spraying a barrage of laser fire. "Dren, what are you doing?"

"Flight Leader, we're under attack!" shouted a panicked Echo Two. "I don't know where—"

"It's Dren!" Echo One cried shrilly. "Dren's firing on us! What's happening?"

"He's taken out my shield generator! He—"

"What's happening over there, Flight Leader?" Echo Five asked.

"Focus on the Headhunters, Echo Five!" Essara snapped. "Let us worry about the situation here."

"Oh no!" Echo Eight cried. "Those new Headhunters are firing missiles at us!"

"Those are just concussion missiles," Echo Six said. "We can shoot those down, no problem. Our shields can even take one or two of them."

Essara banked left, watching the fast-moving fighters blipping in and out on her tactical display as her sensors attempted to keep up with them. Ten were heading for her and the two Echo fighters in her vicinity while the others were engaging the rest of Echo Flight. She tried to get a firing angle on Dren as he shot at Echo Two again.

Her tactical display was a kaleidoscope of green and red blips, and flashes of cannon fire ignited the black, starry sky.

Echo Two's right nacelle burst into a deadly bloom of debris and shrapnel, and the

Police Cruiser went spinning out of control. Echo One reacted with admirable speed, cutting sharply down and to the left in an effort to avoid her damaged wingman, but it still wasn't fast enough. Echo Two's pilot shrieked as the dome of his cockpit slammed into the fuselage of Echo One, destroying its astromech droid.

"Kerl?!" Echo One cried, swinging up and reentering Essara's field of vision on her right.

Dren arced around the careening Echo Two, swinging fore over aft and turning on his fighter's axis as he set an intercept course for Echo One. Essara maintained her pursuit, still trying to achieve that elusive firing angle.

Echo One continued to call for her wingman. "Kerl?! Kerl, come in! Are you okay?! Kerl?!"

"Dren!" Essara shouted over the tight-beam frequency. "What are you doing?"

"I didn't want to make either of us choose our loyalties like this," he replied. "And I don't want any more of these kids to die if it can be helped. Tell them to power down their starfighters, now."

Essara cycled through her command readouts until the telemetry from Dren's fighter came up. He had armed another pair of torpedoes and was locking his targeting scanner on Echo One. "Dren, please don't."

"Essara!" Echo One screamed as she started wild evasive maneuvers. "Dren's locked onto me! Help me! Please, help me!"

"Listen to her," Dren said. "We don't belong here, Essara."

"What are you talking about?"

Essara watched as Dren's target lock on Echo One was lost, reacquired, then lost again. *Great flying, kid,* she thought. *Keep it up, and I'll commend you when this is all over.*

"Can't you see that real soldiers like us shouldn't be wasted on a useless world like this one?"

"Dren, I think there might be something wrong with the atmosphere in your cockpit. You're talking crazy. Stop this before it's too late." Essara banked sharply and locked her lasers onto Dren's ship. Ell-one issued a series of alarmed trills, to which she shouted, "Override the blasted FoF protocols! Haven't you been paying attention back there?!"

The droid offered a contrite-sounding burble. When Essara fired her laser cannon, the droid did nothing to prevent it. Dren spun his fighter away from her line of fire. The blasts only grazed his shields, and he managed to keep Essara from dropping into the automatic kill-zone on his tail.

"You've seen the way some of them look at us," Dren said. "They need us to protect them from the perils of the galaxy, but most of them would rather see us far away from Naboo. I've found a place where we will be appreciated for our skill, not looked down on."

"Dren, you're not making any sense," Essara said. "When have the people in the Security Force not been treated as heroes? Stop attacking us. Help us deal with the real enemy."

Essara's astromech beeped urgently. Essara gritted her teeth and fought to gain a target lock on Dren. *A pair of well-placed torpedoes should bring down his shields and disable his fighter without killing him.*

Dren was playing with Echo One now, anticipating the young pilot's every move. "I realized some time ago that there's no place for me on Naboo. You know how they say you can never go home again? Well, I believe that now."

"Flight Leader, help! I can't keep doing this! I'm not good enough without the droid!"

"Oh no!" Echo Eight suddenly shouted. "Oh no!"

Echo Four let out a panicked cry.

Essara switched to the general frequency. "Echo Three, report."

"Echo Five! Get him off my tail!"

"Flight Leader," Echo One wailed. The girl was now sobbing. Dren had established a firm lock on her, but Essara had still not managed to maintain one on Dren. Essara knew was not going to save this girl.

The droid beeped again.

"If you're not going to be useful, shut up," she hissed at it. *And what about Echo Flight?* Based on what she was seeing on her tactical screen, Echo Flight was coping with Headhunters—the number of enemies had been cut in half. So what was causing such panic over there? Was she losing more than just Dren's victims? And where had those two mystery craft gotten to?

Essara's fighter was rocked by a sudden impact. A shower of sparks burst from the control panel as her command screen went

black. The cockpit filled with the smell of overheating wires, and all her power system indicators were spiking into their red zones. Her shields were overloading,

suggesting that she'd either been hit by an energy torpedo or a turbo-laser blast.

THREE OF THE UNCLASSIFIED FIGHTERS HAVE MANEUVERED BEHIND US. I TRIED TO TELL YOU. NOW, PLEASE PAY ATTENTION BEFORE WE ARE BOTH DAMAGED BEYOND REPAIR.

Essara cursed. There were three blips on her tail. She had been so preoccupied with Dren that she hadn't noticed. Her fighter shuddered as it was struck again.

"Adjust the shields before we lose everything!" Essara cried.

DONE. SHIELDS ARE AT 86 PERCENT AND HOLDING. SEVERAL RELAYS HAVE BLOWN. POWER MUST BE DRAWN FROM THE LASER TO RECHARGE THE SHIELDS.

"Drop the laser recharge rate to 60 percent. See if you can't get the power grid back to full efficiency."

IF SOMEONE HAD BEEN PAYING ATTENTION TO ME, WE WOULDN'T BE IN THIS SITUATION.

"I'm hit! I can't shake him!" Echo One shrieked hysterically.

"Listen to her," Dren said contemptuously. "She isn't cut out for this, not like you and me. Tell them to power down their ships. You do the same, no one will die, and I'll explain everything to you in detail."

"You're asking me to betray Naboo," Essara hissed, trying to shake those mysterious fighters. All she could do was bank left and right, shooting wildly at Dren. He easily evaded her fire.

Dren was playing with Echo One now. "You know how they say you can never go home again? I believe that now."

"There's no winning this one, Essara. Stand down before it's too late." Dren continued to pursue Echo One. Even while dodging Essara's continued barrages of fire, he managed to remain on the less experienced pilot's tail.

Echo One continued to scream and wail. Other voices would occasionally cut in, but Essara couldn't make out what they were saying.

Dren launched his torpedoes and banked right.

"Ell-one, target Bravo Eight's torpedoes!" Essara yelled, letting Dren escape for now. The droid obeyed instantly, and flashing brackets appeared around the triangular icons on her screen that represented the missiles. She steadied her course, briefly letting the droid starfighter pummel her rear shields with its lasers. She pressed the trigger on her cannon and kept it down, holding her breath as the missiles and the brilliant arc of laser blasts crossed paths. One torpedo exploded harmlessly, but then her cannon stopped firing. She glanced at the power gauge. The laser was drained. *The 60 percent recharge rate I forgot about it!*

Dren's second torpedo struck the Police Cruiser. The explosion spread across the energy barrier like colored water poured onto a stone. Then, a secondary explosion ripped through the fighter's hull as its shield generator overloaded. The remains of the shattered astromech unit were ejected through the loading hatch as the fighter's secondary systems started to malfunction.

"Cut all power, Echo One," Essara said. "Stop that cascade overload before it gets out of hand!"

Echo One's only response was a ragged sob, but the girl followed Essara's order. The blue glow of her ion engines winked out, and the Police Cruiser's icon turned into an outline on Essara's tactical display.

"Tap your maneuvering thrusters to stop that forward momentum," Essara said, swinging her fighter right to maintain her pursuit of Dren. "We'll get you out of there soon enough."

"Echo Ten to Flight Leader," a harried voice came. "Those tiny fighters are cutting us to ribbons!"

"Echo Flight, ignore the rest of the Z-95s for now," Essara said. "Take out those fast fighters."

"If you pups you want to live, power down like Echo One did," Dren said.

"Says the guy who killed Echo Two!" Echo Eight's voice had an edge to it that hadn't been there before.

"Yeah," Echo Five chimed in. "What about Bravo Eight, Flight Leader?"

"Dren's mine. You have your orders," Essara replied. Switching to the tight-beam channel, she said, "Tell those droid ships to get off my tail and then you and I can settle this, one on one."

"I think not," Dren said. "You're a better dogfighter than I am. Surrender, now."

SHIELDS AT 100 PERCENT. RESETTING LASER RECHARGE TO FULL. I'VE GOT A PAIR OF TORPEDOES LOADED. LOCKING ONTO BRAVO EIGHT.

"All I need is a split second," Essara said.

TARGET ACQUIRED.

Essara pushed the launch button. Two torpedoes streaked toward Dren.

Dren cursed, and his voice was drowned out by a burst of overlapping signals as Echo Flight's pilots once again began talking over one another. Essara stole a quick glance at her command

telemetry display and found that it was still offline. "Ell-one, can you fix my command monitor?"

She looked over her shoulder and, with perverse anticipation, watched the torpedoes streak toward Dren's ship. But then a stream of laser fire poured over her canopy and detonated both torpedoes. Another burst pelted her shields.

SHIELDS AT 69 PERCENT AND RECHARGING, the droid said. REDUCING LASER RECHARGE RATE TO 90 PERCENT.

"How can such tiny fighters carry so much firepower and be so fast?"

IF THEY ARE DROID STARFIGHTERS, THE POWER THAT WOULD NORMALLY BE ALLOCATED TO LIFE SUPPORT CAN GO INTO WEAPONS, AND THE SPACE RESERVED FOR THE PILOT CAN BE USED FOR WEAPONS OR PROPULSION.

"Those fighters won't stop until all of Echo Flight is dead or disabled," Dren said once the urgent babble from Echo Flight subsided. Dren had confirmed Essara's worst fear. "Check your telemetry if you don't believe me."

"Just tell me why," Essara said as she threw her fighter into an upward corkscrew, hoping to lose her pursuers. She was in serious trouble if she didn't deal with them somehow. Droids never got tired or distracted. She needed to focus all her wits and dismiss the confused, angry thoughts that tumbled through her mind regarding Dren. The anger that had consumed her was starting to give way to fear.

"My employer is dedicated to building a strong planetary defense force in the system he governs," Dren said. "A cutting edge defense force. The Naboo starfighters are the cutting edge he's looking for. All the governor wants are two or three N-1s and a couple of Police Cruisers in working condition so his engineers can build their own version."

"All this just to steal some fighters?!"

"Not just fighters, N-1 fighters. These ships really are greater than the sum of their parts. I told my employer that even if he could convince the Nubians to trade with him, he still wouldn't be able to build fighters that even came close to the Naboo starfighter... unless he had some working ships to study. He thought I might be exaggerating the N-1's capabilities, so he wanted a demonstration. The second carrier launching its fighters was the sign that he liked what he saw."

"Two carriers to capture a pair of N-1s?"

Dren sighed. "No, but he wanted to have numbers so overwhelming that only an idiot would put up a fight."

"I guess I'm an idiot then," Essara said. The fear of the starfighters on her tail was being burned away by anger at herself and hatred for Dren. How could she have read him so wrong? How could she have been so obtuse? How could she have let him into her dreams? Another barrage struck her shields.

SHIELDS AT 75 PERCENT AND RECHARGING. LASER CANNON RECHARGE RATE AT 85 PERCENT.

"There's no running from them," Essara said. "Load torpedoes. Reduce laser recharge to 20 percent and redirect all power to the forward shields."

The droid squealed with alarm. Essara pushed her throttle to maximum and threw her fighter into an overhead loop.

The tiny fighters slowed as Essara performed a wing-over and put herself directly in one of their paths. Ell-one established a

target lock for her. The tiny enemy fighters started to accelerate again, and the

lock was again lost as they reached speeds that were beyond the targeting sensor's ability to track them. Essara had expected this, however.

TORPEDOES READY. UNABLE TO REACQUIRE TARGET LOCK.

"I know."

The droid starfighter element jogged to the right. Essara matched the movement, holding the nose-to-nose approach with her chosen target.

WE'RE GOING TO COLLIDE!

"I know."

The droid starfighter fired its lasers. Essara held her course as Ell-one beeped urgently and her fighter rocked. Essara bit her lower lip, struggling to steady her nerves and to stick with her desperate plan. The droid starfighter changed course again, attempting to avoid collision. She put herself in its path again. A collision alert chimed. She spotted a scratch on the fighter's left fin, and she could see the muzzles on both of its lasers glowing. She fired her torpedoes and banked sharply left. Her gamble paid off—the enemy didn't have time to avoid the torpedoes, and they impacted squarely on its fuselage.

NICE TRICK. ONE DESTROYED, TWO DAMAGED. WE CAN OUTFLY THEM NOW. OUR SHIELDS ARE AT 45 PERCENT AND RECHARGING.

Essara eased the throttle back to standard attack speed as fragments of the blasted droid starfighter scattered into space. She would have to get Ric to authorize a complete download of Ell-one's memory banks and scans so she could analyze the attack pattern of that tiny starfighter. She would hate to think of anyone facing one of them without being adequately prepared. But first, she was going to deal with Dren. "Locate Bravo Eight."

HE'S ENGAGING THE REMAINING ECHO FLIGHT SHIPS.

Until that moment, she hadn't realized that the shouts of Echo Flight had completely died out. They had been calling, but now they were silent. Essara felt another chill, but then realized that her long-range communication system had shorted out. Her tactical display showed her that Echo Flight was still in the fight, but how many and whom she couldn't tell because her telemetry display was still down. "Start repairing the damaged systems," she told the astromech. "Blast!"

Another trio of droid fighters were coming in fast on her right. Essara threw the throttle forward and sent her fighter sharply into a tailspin. She caught a brief glimpse of TFP-9 and the distant glimmer of Echo Flight and the other tiny starfighters exchanging fire. Then she was spinning into the blackness of space.

Laser volleys streaked harmlessly past her, but her starfighter jerked with the impact of missiles and then shuddered under the impact of another shower of laser fire. Her astromech issued a series of trilling whistles. She didn't catch what the droid said before the translator shorted out, but her systems monitor told her what she needed to know anyway. She had just lost shields.

"Concentrate on getting the shields back online!" she shouted.

Essara twisted the fighter sharply to the right, then threw it into a partial barrel roll before changing directions into another sharp downward dive. Blaster bolts streaked by the cockpit.

The fighter creaked and groaned. Ell-one squealed in a panic.

"I know the engine housing is threatening to tear itself loose! Get those shields back up, and I'll stop testing the ship's tolerance limits!"

Essara continued to whip her fighter back and forth, drawing her breath in sharp intakes whenever she heard its stabilizers groan and whenever another warning light blinked to life on her instrument panel.

Without warning, her long-range communications were restored. "Get him off my tail!" she heard a Echo Four scream.

"Shields!" Essara snapped to the droid. "Get me shields."

Ell-one beeped and hooted. Essara had no idea what it was saying, but it didn't sound polite.

Echo Four continued his desperate plea. "Someone, please—"

The transmission ended in a burst of static.

"Echo Flight," Essara said, her voice clear and commanding.

"This is Bravo Leader. Keep it together, people. Cover your wingman. We can win this. Who's still with me?"

"Echo Six here," a voice came. "Battered but still moving."

"Echo Two reporting," came a weak voice.

"Ker!" several pilots cried.

"I'm hurt bad, Flight Leader. And my fighter's in pieces."

"Hang on," Essara said. "We'll get you out of there."

"Echo One here, but my fighter's disabled and my astromech droid was taken out when Bravo Seven attacked us."

"Echo Five here. I've taken a couple of hits, but the ship's holding together and my astromech's doing repairs. Bravo Eight just disabled Echo Eight and Echo Seven, Flight Leader. I don't know if Keela's still alive or not. Eleven and Twelve were both destroyed by one of those fast fighters, and I'm not sure about anyone else."

Three active fighters left. Echo Four, Nine, Ten, Eleven, and Twelve confirmed dead. The rest disabled, some of the pilots possibly dying. They had neither the numbers nor the skill to deal with the droid starfighters. If those Z-95s decided to rejoin the battle, they would be able to overwhelm the battered remains of Echo Flight.

The battle had turned into butchery. She had to stop it.

"Power down your ships, Echo Flight," she said. "We're surrendering."

"What?" Echo Five cried.

"I gave you an order!" Essara gritted her teeth as she barely managed to dodge another volley from the droid starfighter on her tail. "There's nothing glorious about a pointless death. Power down your ships and surrender."

"Wise call, Essara," Dren said triumphantly.

But I'm taking you down, you treacherous grank, she thought. Her astromech issues a series of familiar whoops and whistles. It was asking if it should initiate the shutdown sequence.

"No. I'm going to keep fighting until we get Bravo Eight."

The droid offered an affirmative chirp. Her shields came back online. They were recharging. The power indicator was not as precise as the astromech droid, but she could tell they were at least at 50 percent strength.

She glanced at her tactical display. Her flight from the droid starfighter had taken her in the direction of the first carrier. A desperate idea popped into her head. She banked sharply to the left.

"Arm torpedoes," she told the astromech droid. "We're taking on the carrier."

The droid issued a panicked flurry of sounds.

"You're going to help me avoid their defensive fire. If we're lucky, maybe a stray shot from the carrier will soften up the droid starfighters for us."

"Essara, what are you doing?" Dren asked.

The translation screen came on just in time for her to see Ell-one say, WE CAN'T GET DREN IF WE'RE DEAD.

"And we're dead if we don't do something about those droid starfighters," she snapped back.

The torpedoes loaded. Essara targeted the bump near the center of the carrier's bulk: its primary bridge. She took its captain and gunners by surprise, because their point defense weapons didn't start firing until four seconds after her torpedoes had launched.

"Help me get as close to the carrier as possible, Ell-one," she said, diving the fighter sharply down toward the hull. She felt the astromech droid adjust the ship's attitude, starting to pull out of the dive a second before she was planning to.

The torpedoes passed through the flak and with the astromech droid's help, Essara wove safely through what seemed like the solid wall of superheated plasma bolts that rose from the carrier.

Once Essara was under the carrier's defensive barrage, the capital ship's matte-gray hull spread out before her like a vast desert. Its weapons spewed death like erupting volcanoes, but she flew too close for most of the weapons to target her.

The torpedoes impacted on the carrier as she started firing wildly across its hull. "Load another couple of torpedoes!"

TWO DROID STARFIGHTERS ARE STILL PURSUING. ANOTHER WAS TAKEN OUT BY FRIENDLY FIRE.

The astromech continued to beep and trill, but Essara didn't dare look at the translation screen long enough to get the rest. Even with Ell-one's assistance, she needed to concentrate on piloting. Flying this close to a capital ship, traveling at the speed she was going, was almost certain suicide even without a mechanized killer in pursuit.

A gun emplacement seemed to materialize directly in her path, its barrels swinging to fire at her. Essara's conscious mind had barely registered its presence, but she was already firing on instinct. The emplacement burst into hundreds of metal shards that ricocheted off her shields.

ONE DROID GOT KNOCKED OUT BY THE EXPLOSION. CARRIER'S SHIELDS AT 44 PERCENT. OUR SHIELDS AT 34 PERCENT AND HOLDING.

The last droid on her tail fired, some of the bolts hitting her, others streaking off into space or impacting against the carrier's shields. The enemy fired again, and Essara's ship rocked from the impact. More stray shots burst against the carrier's shields.

TORPEDOES READY FOR LAUNCH. CARRIER'S SHIELDS AT 43 PERCENT AND RECHARGING. OUR SHIELDS ARE AT 23 PERCENT AND HOLDING. THE DROID—

"Keep the torps coming," Essara said as she banked right. She cycled her targeting computer. A communications array 200 meters away appeared as a possible target. Without hesitating,

she launched the torpedoes.

The astromech droid shrieked as they were enveloped in the resulting explosion. A section of the transceiver dish bounced off Essara's canopy, leaving a groove in the transparasteel as wide as her hand. Essara struggled to keep her starfighter under control, and Ell-one shrieked again as Essara clipped the carrier's energy shield. Her shields threatened to overload again, and panels of system warning lights illuminated her cockpit. "Ell-one!"

REDIRECTING POWER. THE DROID SHIP WAS DAMAGED BY THE EXPLOSION, TOO. IT'S SLOWING.

The cockpit once again filled with the acrid smell of melting wires as targeting sensor blinked out. She cursed and hit the panel. It came back on.

GETTING VIOLENT WILL NOT SPEED THE REPAIRS. CARRIER'S SHIELDS AT 31 PERCENT AND RECHARGING. OUR SHIELDS AT 12 PERCENT.

The carrier's hull was coming to an end, revealing the black gulf of space. Several guns were already swinging into position to target her as she zoomed away from the capital ship's surface. "Not just yet," she whispered. "You're not going to get me just yet."

Torpedoes ready.

Her targeting scanner flickered, threatening to cut out along with life support, attitude control, and the astromech translation unit.

She would have to trust in the astromech's ability to keep the fighter together.

She plunged over the edge of the carrier, whipping her fighter to the right and skimming along its narrower side. To her surprise, the guns here were firing not in her direction but away from her.

Then she saw the Police Cruiser, just as her collision alert system warned her of its presence. A pair of missiles streaked past her, and her fighter bucked from the resulting explosion as the missiles struck the droid starfighter.

"I couldn't follow that order, Flight Leader," she heard Echo Five say. "Not when you were taking on that monstrosity by yourself."

"Consider yourself reprimanded," Essara replied, targeting one of the carrier's shield generators and firing her torpedoes. They both found their mark.

CARRIER'S SHIELDS AT 22 PERCENT AND RECHARGING. OURS ARE AT 12 PERCENT AND HOLDING.

"I'm with you, Flight Leader," Echo Five said.

Echo Five and Essara fired their torpedoes as if their launchers were synchronized. Both fighters spun away from the carrier as explosions started to spread across its hull. The carrier's power plant overloaded, and the ship was consumed by the explosion. For an instant the carrier burned like a sun, and then as quickly the darkness consumed it.

"Fall in, Echo Five," Essara said. "We're going to take out Bravo Eight."

"Disable him?"

Essara glanced at her tactical display. In the distance, the few surviving Headhunters were retreating to the remaining carrier. It appeared that Echo Six had also disobeyed her order to power down and was clumsily attempting to dogfight with Dren.

Something tugged at Essara's heart. Was Dren just another greedy monster who would sacrifice his comrades-in-arms for

For an instant the carrier burned like a sun, and then as quickly the darkness consumed it.

credits? Maybe there was something else going on, something he hadn't dared

talk about. If they could take him alive and chase off that second carrier, maybe something could be salvaged out of this.

But then Echo Six vanished from her tactical display.

"Harlaan!" Echo Five exclaimed. "He killed Harlaan!"

Essara growled, all doubt consumed by seething anger. She pressed her fire button as soon as Ell-one established the lock.

Dren's voice came over the tight-beam channel. "How many more pilots are you willing to sacrifice? Believe me, Essara, I didn't want it to happen like this, and I don't want to see you blasted into space."

"The feeling's not mutual," Essara replied. She pressed the fire button again. All she got was an electronic squelch from her instrument panel.

THE MAGAZINES ARE EMPTY.

Essara watched as the betrayer throttled up to full power and fled toward the remaining carrier, Essara's torpedoes on his tail. "Their blood is on both of our hands, Essara," he said. "Believe me, you've made a huge mistake today."

"I made my mistake months ago," she replied. "Now, I can only try to correct it."

"Flight Leader, those torpedoes you fired are catching up with him," Echo Five broke in.

He was right. As Essara watched her tactical readout, she saw Dren alter course to bring his laser cannons to bear against the torpedoes.

"We can cut him off before he reaches the carrier," Echo Five continued eagerly.

"Let's do it. Fall in," Essara closed with Echo Five until they were in a tight formation. Within moments, they were between Dren and the *Velumina*.

"Mr. Melne, I'm declaring this exercise a failure," the voice of the *Velumina*'s gravelly voiced captain came. "I'll convey your regrets to the governor."

"What?"

Several small explosions burst across the hull of the distant carrier. A swarm of blips appeared on Essara's flickering tactical display.

"Missiles incoming!" shouted Echo Five. "Hey! Only one is targeted at me."

Essara saw that only one missile was targeting her as well, yet the carrier had launched at least a dozen. "Where are the rest going?"

DREN, the astromech replied.

"We had a deal!" Dren shouted as he targeted and destroyed Essara's torpedoes.

"You promised us a minimum of two fighters. It seems you are unable to deliver even one." The carrier's ion engines flared to life as it started to move away.

"I can jump out of here under my own power!" he cried.

"They might trace you, Melne, or they might stop you before make the jump. It has been pleasure knowing you. Good bye."

"Their blood is on both of our hands, Essara," he said. "Believe me, you've made a huge mistake today."

Essara realized that she had to save Dren's life. "He's the only one who'll be able to explain what was really going on here."

She threw her fighter into a hard arc, bringing it about and spraying laser fire in front of her. She was now squarely in the path of the oncoming missiles. Four of the missiles exploded in bright flashes of energy.

Not enough, Essara thought. *Four is not enough.*

One of the missiles struck Essara's fighter hard. The shields failed, and her damaged instrument panel exploded in a shower of sparks and shrapnel. Blood gushed into her left eye from a gash on her forehead.

Dren's scream ended in a burst of static. Essara watched, flinching as Dren's fighter disintegrated under the impact of eight concussion missiles.

"They killed their own man?" Echo Five said, the shock evident in his voice. "Why?"

"That's why I came home," Essara said, feeling sick, both from the fumes in her cockpit and from the tugging in her heart. "I came home because the Naboo barely understand the meaning of the word 'betrayal.'"

"Governor Challep of Agamar is denying his people's involvement in the TFP-9 incident,"

Sio Bibble said. "We have nonetheless sent a request to our senatorial delegation that an investigation be launched."

Five days had passed since the battle at TFP-9. The grateful technicians on the space station recovered the damaged starfighters and provided medical care for the surviving pilots. Only five of Echo Flight's twelve pilots made it back to Naboo alive. A memorial service and planet-wide day of remembrance in their honor was being planned for those who perished. Although Ric Olié had offered to perform the unpleasant duty of informing their families, Essara felt obligated to do it herself. It had been her mission, so it was her responsibility. She had just spoken to the last set of parents when Bibble summoned her and Ric to his office to update them on the ongoing investigation.

"We have already confirmed that that Agamar has been purchasing new starfighters and other weapons technology," Bibble continued, "including at least one hundred droid starfighters of Xi Char manufacture."

Ric said, "And according to Royal Starfighter Corps records, there have been at least three requests from Agamar to purchase N-1s or Police Cruisers. The Queen's Advisory Council declined all three times."

"Any links between the government of Agamar and Dren?"

"No sir, nothing that you wouldn't expect. Most mercenaries spend at least a few months in the service of Agamar. Even Essara here."

Bibble cocked his head in her direction.

"Early in my career offworld, sir," Essara said. "I don't know anything about the current state in the system."

"We traced some credit transfers made from an account Dren had on Ord Mantell to an account he had in Selton," Bibble said. "One hundred thousand credits had recently been deposited in

his Ord Mantell account, but we're having a hard time verifying where that money originated."

"And Ord Mantell isn't helping you much, are they?"

"No. The so-called 'authorities' there take pride in allowing 'discrete' transactions."

"What about Dren's relatives?" Ric asked.

"They had nothing useful to offer," Essara replied.

Essara had gone to see Dren's parents yesterday evening. She had met with three sets of devastated parents earlier that day, and as she piloted her aircar away from Theed, her face still stung from being slapped by a woman who would never be a grandmother thanks to Dren's treachery.

From a certain point of view, Dren had been right. Centuries ago, Naboo had been settled by colonists who wanted to preserve their cultured lifestyle. They had envisioned a society free of the barbarism they felt was spreading across the galaxy. Although the Naboo people at large were pacifists, Dren's parents seemed as reactionary and volatile as their early forebears. Essara's brief encounter with them had left her feeling ill.

"We knew he had been corrupted," his mother had said. "I am not surprised that he no longer felt any loyalty to his homeworld. We raised him properly, you can ask anyone here. But he wouldn't listen to us. He wanted to see the rest of the galaxy."

"We told him there was no coming home when he left," Dren's father had said. "We told him that when he returned wearing that hideous black flight suit and carrying a blaster! Can you believe he brought that weapon into our house? Not a hunting rifle, but a pistol! A weapon of war!"

They feared and despised the rest of the galaxy. Anyone who brought the galaxy's problems to Naboo was worse than a plague. Dren's parents didn't bother to hide the contempt they felt for Essara's uniform, eventually telling her that they believed the Royal Security Force invited strife and violence through its very existence. "Before Veruna, it was just a small palace guard. But then he decided he should involve Naboo in the filthy dealings of the rest of the galaxy, so now you people have starfighters and armored landspeeders. It's no wonder you and your pilots were attacked. Weapons don't prevent violence. They cause it!"

When Dren's younger brother—a shaak wrangler—showed up, he ejected Essara from the home. The parents had looked on with pride as he chased her into the street, cursing her as a corrupting influence on their homeworld.

Essara grimaced. "Dren hadn't had much contact with them since he first left Naboo. As far as I could determine, he only visited them once since his return."

"Nothing but dead ends," Bibble said. "The Queen won't be happy to hear that."

"I don't suppose she will," Essara said, sagging slightly in her chair. "None of us want to see our people die for no reason."

"Hopefully, the Senate will choose to investigate," Ric said. "Is there anything else, sir?"

"Not at the moment. Thank you both for your assistance and service."

Ric Olié and Essara Till walked back to their shared office. The administrative wing was buzzing with activity, something for which Essara was grateful. The silence from Echo Flight's ready room would have been too much for her to bear.

"Essara, are you sure you're all right?" Ric asked, closing the office door behind them.

"I've lost pilots before," she replied taking her seat behind her desk. She gingerly touched the healing wound on her forehead. "And this scratch is nothing, like I told the medics."

"I know, but—"

"No buts, Ric. We've got a lot of work to do." She started reviewing the datapads on her desk, checking one, then another. When she realized that Ric was standing in front of her desk, she looked up. "Yes?"

"We all appreciate your dedication, Essara, but... well, you and Dren were pretty close. No one would think less of you if you took some time for yourself."

"I'm fine," she said, focusing on the datapad. But those words alone weren't enough to discourage Ric. When she looked up, he was gazing at her with a familiar concerned look. "Do you see a dark side to our introspective culture?" she asked.

"What do you mean?"

"When I came home, it was as if I'd never left. I guess I'm lucky to have such supportive friends and family. It wasn't the same for Dren. Our world turned against him. His family *reviled* him. While I dreamt of a quiet life in the mountains, all he could see was fear and hatred. I thought Naboo was different, but in some ways it's not."

"Naboo is not like the rest of the galaxy," said Ric. "I think most of our differences are preferable to what you'll find offworld, but it's naive to assume there aren't those among us who are, well, less decent than we'd like. Those people loomed large in Dren's worldview, but they are a minority."

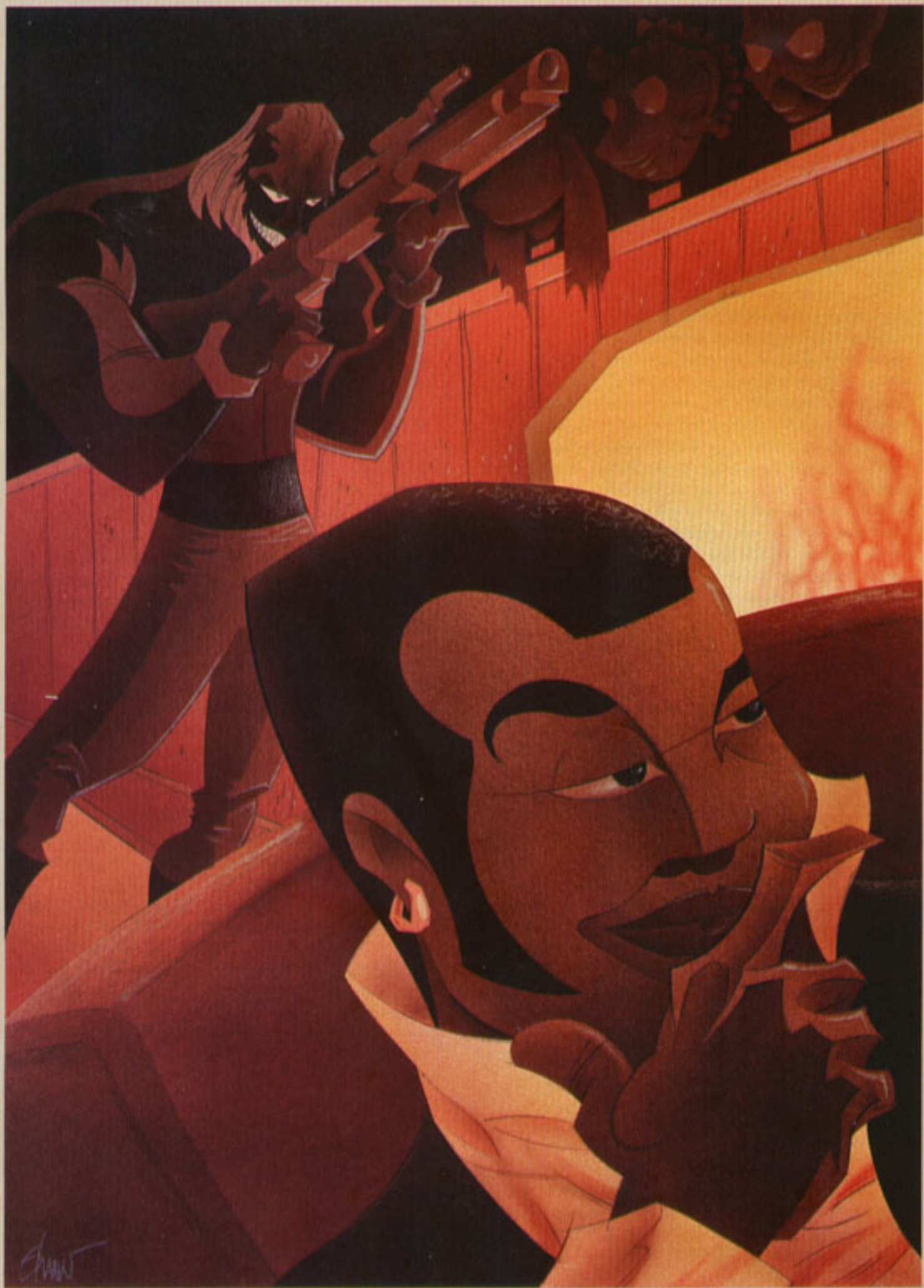
"I just need to keep busy," she said.

He frowned at her, then nodded slowly. From the expression, Essara could tell he had the words "I'm really sorry about Dren" on his tongue. Thankfully, he could read her expression too and knew that it was better for both of them if it remained unspoken.

"Most people on Naboo understand that the Royal Security Force allows them to lead their peaceful lives. Veruna might have drawn Naboo into too many offworld affairs, but we would have had to expand the Security Force regardless. Times are changing. You and I both know that. If we do our jobs right, the people won't have to worry about it, though."

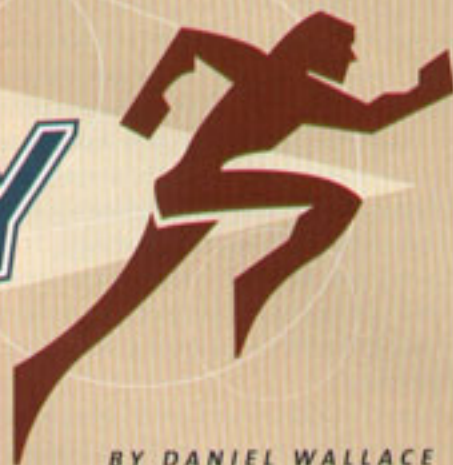
Essara gave Ric's words a moment's thought before changing the subject. "You need to fill a vacancy in Bravo Flight. Here are three pilots that I recommend highly." She took up the datapad and handed it to him. "They are the best Echo has to offer, even if they don't always follow orders."

Ric read the datapad. It contained the service records for Rhys Darrow, Keela Egast, and Evenyl Yob... Echo Five, Echo Eight, and Echo One. 





FAIR PREY



BY DANIEL WALLACE
ILLUSTRATED BY STAN SHAW

"Six meters OF MUSCLE, TEETH, AND VENOM."

Tyro Viveca, the galaxy's wealthiest Krish, raised his glass and took a long sip of dun brandy. "Hyperfast reflexes and a vicious streak as wide as the Cron Drift. I'd say you're looking at the most efficient predator in history." He loosed a razor-edged smile at his visitor. "My taxidermist just stuffed it this morning."

The alien's guest politely stepped forward and leaned in to examine the specimen: a gray-green tube of flesh, looking like the repulsive offspring of a serpent and an eel, coiled on a polished wooden base. Its head, frozen in mid-strike, was a mass of glistening white spikes.

"Impressive," the man said, raising his eyebrows quizzically as he turned back toward his beaming host. "Aren't Florn lamproids sentient?"

"Unquestionably. Though they lack the culture and art you and I take for granted, they have the brains to solve fiendishly complex puzzles. That's what makes them such a smashing hunt." Viveca strolled to the side table and removed the crystal stopper from a heavy cut-glass decanter. "More brandy?"

The visitor shook him off with a wave of his hand and settled back into an armchair with a squeak of leather and a sigh of cushioning. His bright eyes scanned his surroundings for the dozenth time. The room was an enclosed octagon with pillars at the corners, dark walls trimmed with gold. A pair of holographic lamps provided dim illumination, but he could clearly make out the severed heads of a hundred sundry creatures, each mounted on a varnished plaque bearing the unlucky beast's species, weight, planet of origin, and date of death. Seven niches held full-sized predators arrayed in fearsome poses; the eighth held Viveca's rarest firearms and his collection of antique water pipes. The entire room stank of tabac and desiccated hides.

"That's the male, you know," Viveca held his half-filled glass on the balls of his scaled fingers, swirling the liquid lazily. His guest looked up questioningly.

"The lamproid," Viveca explained. "I killed and mounted the male. I sedated and captured his mate, and have her locked on the grounds for a later hunt. Perhaps you'd care to join me."

"Perhaps," the visitor answered, resting both booted feet on a bantha-leg ottoman. "But I believe we have business to take care of first."

"Indeed," remarked the paunchy Krish. "I seldom receive uninvited callers, because most beings realize my time is of immense value. You claim to have something to show me. It had better be worth it."

"Don't worry," assured conman Cecil Noone, sliding a ribbed metal box out from beside his chair and flashing the most charming grin in his arsenal. "You won't be disappointed."

The skies of Kabal opened up for the third time that morning. Kels Turkhorn snarled and resisted the urge to sprint for the awning of the nearest merchant tent. The locals took the sudden cloudbursts in stride and Kels didn't want to give off an outsider's vibe. Fat raindrops splashed on her nose, matted her whitish hair, and trickled down the back of her neck.

The busy marketplace carried the hot scent of sweat and the salty tang of the coastal breeze. Mindful of the unfamiliar bodies in close proximity, Kels clutched her supply bag with both hands. Even a professional pickpocket could sometimes get taken to the cleaners.

The drenched bazaar was one of the few public attractions in Palisade, a small coastal community on Kabal's largest equatorial island. Less than a year ago the planet had been disciplined by a

wing of Imperial TIE bombers for declaring its neutrality in the Galactic Civil War. But the damage had been confined to Kabal's capital city, half a hemisphere away.

The residents of Palisade continued to lead quiet, industrious lives centered on fishing and a modest tourist trade.

A burst of loud, mocking laughter caught Kels' attention. Farther down the boulevard sat another trader's stall, this one with a dirty gray awning instead of the striped pink and white ones that draped the bazaar in incongruous gaiety. Starship parts, dead appliances, plastic sandals, and other miscellaneous junk lay piled on the stall's front display table. The proprietor, a female Squib with grease-stained fur and one clipped ear, was leaning out of the booth and shaking her fist menacingly.

"This new wire, you say?" screeched the Squib. "Not likely, I say! This junk!" She tossed a small coil of golden wire back to her customer and crossed her arms in smug satisfaction. "You barter with that? You crazy!"

Kels saw the target of the Squib's abuse and closed her eyes in resigned pain. "Dawson," she muttered, and moved quickly through the crowd to her compatriot's rescue.

Dawson stood barely a head taller than the diminutive Squib. A Tynnan, his aquatic mammalian ancestry was evident in his webbed paws and sleek brown pelt. Dawson tried to say something but was cut off with a fresh gush of invective.

"That junk!" the Squib chittered. "You junk! You ugly face! You teeth look like two big deckplates!" Two tall, red-maned aliens who were lingering nearby to watch the exchange roared with laughter and looked at the Tynnan to see if the taunts would spark a reaction.

Kels came alongside Dawson and placed one hand on his shoulder. He peered up at her through the lenses of his ocular enhancer. "Kels!" he cried in welcome. "Just handling a delicate bit of negotiating."

"Right," she said dubiously, eyeing the twenty-centimeter white plastic sphere balanced in Dawson's right palm. "What kind of equipment is that?"

"You ever hear of a Quay?" he asked. "It's a novelty item. A 'pre-programmed prognosticator.' You ask it a question, and it spits out one of several stored answers." Dawson was animated, visibly excited about his discovery. Raindrops tumbled from his quivering whiskers. "I've counted three already."

"It's a toy?" Kels snickered, disgusted. "You're haggling for that little thing?"

"Little, yeah!" cackled the Squib. "Size of you brain!" The two tall aliens laughed again, shaking their shaggy manes and dousing the vicinity with spray.

Kels turned to the Squib, annoyed. "You always treat your customers this way?" she snapped.

"Customer? Hah! News to me. You no buyin', you no customer." The Squib grinned up at her onlookers who responded with appreciative guffaws.

"Let me see that," Kels told Dawson. She took the sphere from the Tynnan's paws and shook it.

"THE SPIRITS SAY YES," boomed the Quay.

Kels took two steps backward as if frightened, bringing her to

the far end of the display table.

"It's stupid," whined Kels petulantly, gripping the Quay in both hands and thrusting it away from her body as if it were a poisonous snake. "I don't want it." She suddenly threw the Quay up in the air, a steep, high arc. The others' eyes looked skyward to follow its path. As Kels brought her arms down, she closed each hand around a power coupling and lifted them from a stack on the table. By the time the toy landed in the Squib's paws, the couplings were tucked away in Kels' waistband sash.

"You done it now!" yelled the Squib, as Kels spun on her heel and walked away. "Broke for sure! You clumsy!" The Squib glared at Dawson, baring her teeth threateningly, then looked down at the Quay. "You broke?" she asked, shaking the toy.

"MY REPLY IS NO."

The Squib, pleased with her joke, looked up at the tall aliens who threw back their heads and howled as if they'd just witnessed the funniest thing in the galaxy. Dawson excused himself and trotted after Kels.

"Wait up!" he shouted, struggling to catch her on his squat legs. She looked back and slowed her pace. Dawson came alongside, splashing through a puddle and ejecting a spray of mud flecks. Kels looked away from the misty coastline toward a distant green swelling of land at the island's interior. "Wonder if Noone's having any luck?"

Recently, Noone, Kels, Dawson, and the Sluissi cyborg Sonax had finally scored in their career as thieves, nabbing a priceless Hapan Gun of Command. In the process, they'd doublecrossed their former Hutt employer, killed a Bimm crimelord, and added insult to injury by stealing the late Bimm's private luxury yacht. Noone, their leader, had urged his employees to be patient. Once the sale of the gun netted them a fortune, they'd never again have to worry about crime bosses with burning vendettas. But weeks later they were still waiting, and patience was in short supply.

The meeting with the Rebel Alliance had been a joke. Despite the Rebels' rumored victory at an Outer Rim bolthole called Yavin, the self-righteous flagwavers didn't have two srip coins to rub together. The fresh-faced Alliance agent had offered less than a tenth of Noone's asking price.

The Empire was even worse. Sonax despised the Imperials from personal experience, so the others had had to assure her they were merely arranging a rendezvous with a local criminal syndicate. Meanwhile, Noone slipped out to negotiate with the Imperial consul-general of Kothlis. But Consul-General Halsek had tried a doublecross of his own, and they'd blasted out of port just ahead of 24 stormtroopers and a legion of planetary militia.

Which is why they'd ended up here, in Palisade. The modest island was dominated by the sprawling estate of Tyro Viveca, a hulking Krish business baron with a legendary reputation for eccentricities. More importantly, he had a passion for sport hunting, and in the past had dropped obscene sums for rare, antique, or cutting-edge weaponry. Now that they'd arrived, Kels wondered why they hadn't tried this avenue before. If you really want to jack up the price on something, she thought with a cruel grin, market it as a 'collectible.'

They entered the saltfish plaza, its stone floor slick with scales and guts. A boom of thunder rolled in from over the sea.

The rain increased its staccato tempo, popping noisily against the awnings of the fishmonger tents. Kels wiped the rain away from her eyes with the heel of her hand, but Dawson seemed to be enjoying the shower.

"Hey, Kels?" queried Dawson. "This is the way to the landing pads. You said we needed power couplings."

Kels patted her waist. "Got 'em." When Dawson still looked puzzled, she pulled back the cloth to partially reveal one. "Lifted them from the Squib."

Dawson's face lit up. "Do you have the Quay?"

"What?" frowned Kels.

"The Quay. Did you palm it?"

"Are you insane? Of course not. You were there. Besides, why would I?"

Dawson's shoulders slumped with sudden gloom and Kels rolled her eyes. Dawson had a childish tendency to fixate on trivialities, then abandon them without warning. He looked back through the haze of rain in the direction of the traders' marketplace, a pathetic lost-cub expression on his face.

Kels laughed and shook her head. "Don't even think about it."

"A Gun of Command," Tyro Viveca breathed with wonder. "An actual working Hapan brain-scrambler."

"I see you're a man who knows his weapons," Noone remarked. "But in most eyewitness accounts Guns of Command are hand pistols. This, as you can see, is a full-sized rifle."

"Yesss..." said Viveca, hefting the firearm and taking a bead down the length of the barrel. He twisted his upper body, sighted on the stuffed head of a Bothan *krak'jya*, and tensed his index finger, stopping short of depressing the trigger fully. "Boom," he whispered, and giggled. He abruptly raised his head and regained his professional composure. "Why is that?"

Noone was taken aback by the Krish's odd display, but didn't show it. "My associates have determined that the rifle is a one-of-a-kind prototype from the Charubah Armaments Guild, packing twice the persuasive potency of their original product." That was only slightly less than a total lie. The prototype angle had been Kels' best guess, and without a Hapan pistol to compare the rifle with, the double-strength claim was a brazen con. "You're welcome to field-test it, of course."

"Thank you. I will. Rutt!" In response to his master's bark, Viveca's Houk servant trundled sluggishly through the doorway. He stood ready at the far wall, piggy eyes downcast, beefy hands folded over his stomach. Viveca blew an amused snort through his flat nostrils. "Hold still, Rutt. This won't hurt a bit."

The room exploded in an inferno of crackling blue sparks. Tendrils of electricity crawled across the Houk's body and dissipated in pulsing waves from his hands and feet. Rutt spasmed once, twice, then assumed a vacant, dead-eyed stance, limbs dangling limply at his sides. If he hadn't remained upright, Noone would have sworn he was dead.

Viveca's eyes narrowed in pleasure. "Rutt—kneel!"

The Houk dropped to both knees with a resounding thunk.

"Rutt—lay!"

The Houk pitched forward and impacted the wooden floor with his face. Noone winced.

"Rutt—howl!"

The Houk drew both arms under his body, threw his head back, and bayed louder than a pack of Corellian canoids. Noone wrinkled his nose with distaste and swallowed a deep draught of dun brandy.

Viveca laughed uproariously and lowered the Gun of Command. "Splendid! How long does the trance last?"

Noone struggled to make himself heard over the servant's strangled braying. "On him? No longer than forty minutes. A human will stay under for at least an hour, an Ugnaught for two or three." This, at least, was entirely true. During their first week of ownership, they'd tested the rifle on a wide variety of unsuspecting marks with impressive results.

Viveca grunted with satisfaction. "Rutt—cease!" The Houk halted in mid cry, though the afterecho continued to reverberate along the wine-colored walls. "Let's get down to business, you and I. How much are you asking?"

Noone locked eyes with the Krish. "One and a half million," he answered coolly. "But to honor your outstanding reputation I'll accept one point three in hard credits."

To Noone's surprise, Viveca didn't even blink. Instead, his eyes hardened and his voice took on an edge of tempered durasteel. "Now let me make you an offer," he hissed in a threatening whisper. "I will take your Gun. I will give you zero credits, hard or otherwise. And if I am feeling charitable I might even give you a chance at saving your worthless hide."

The brandy went down the wrong pipe. Noone gagged violently and hammered his chest with his fist. "Excuse me?" he choked out.

"And you will accept my offer because you are Cecil Noone,

leader of an amateurish band of petty thieves who stole this item from a well-connected crimelord. You will accept because Guttu the Hutt and the heirs of Ritinki each have warrants out on your life. You will accept because you have no other choice."

The blood seemed to be draining from Noone's body and pooling

in the soles of his feet. His mouth struggled to generate a rejoinder and failed.

"Did you really think," Viveca went on, "that you could come skipping into my receiving room under an assumed name and try to sell me the only known prototype of the Hapans' rifle variant? Either you vastly underestimate your own notoriety or you think I have the brains of a gravel-maggot. You're quite famous, Mr. Noone, at least among those who keep tabs on the bit players in organized crime. And fame has its price."

Noone had regained his wits. "You're right, Viveca," he confessed, "you've got me pegged. The Gun, it's all yours. But you know I'm of far more use to you alive, in more ways than you can count. You lose nothing by—"



If you really want to jack up the price on something, she thought with a cruel grin, market it as a 'collectible.'

"My offer," the Krish cut him off, "my only offer, is this. I will let you leave my manor with the clothes on your back and the trinkets in your pockets. If you make it to the

edge of my hunting grounds, you are free to raise ship and leave Kabal forever. But I am a seasoned tracker and an excellent shot. I seldom lose any quarry—certainly not one as foolish and guileless as yourself."

Guileless! Noone thought. He certainly knows how to get under my skin. "You can't be serious," he said aloud, his voice rising with real anger. "You're proposing to hunt me down like a twelve-point quivry for the game of it."

"Oh, but I am serious, Mr. Noone," Viveca looked delighted. "Deadly serious. You will soon learn —"

"No, Viveca, you didn't catch my meaning. I said you can't be serious. You think it's a fresh idea? An over-moneyed nutcase sets up a murder and calls it sport. I've seen it played out a hundred times in the flashy holo-thrillers."

The Krish's lips parted in an angry sneer, revealing interlocking rows of pearlescent daggers. "I hope you were taking notes," he spat. "Rutt!"

The Houk stirred from his prone position on the floor and moved to stand by his master. Viveca nodded at Noone. "Grab him by the collar."

Shuffling zombielike over to Noone's position, the towering alien squeezed the neck of Noone's shirt with one oversized meathook. The fabric stretched, the seam ripped, and the concealed emergency comlink was crushed to powder.

"You will not be calling anyone. You are entirely on your own. At least try to make it an amusing hunt," Viveca leaned back and carefully studied Noone's face. "For verification, Guttu will want your head. Ritinki's heirs will settle for your arms for the fingerprints and pore patterns. Those legs will feed my nashtah. Your torso ... well, that will likely be vaporized with the first hit from my Kell Mark II. I'm terribly sorry Mr. Noone, but only the finest specimens are kept intact for my trophy room."

Time's running out, thought Noone. If I'm going to make a move, it's got to be now.

"Rutt!" Noone shouted, pointing his finger at Viveca. "Kill him!"

Still under the influence of the Gun of Command, the Houk manservant lunged at his master with a feral moan—simultaneously, Noone vaulted a divan and dashed toward the wall display of vintage weapons. With a supple grace belying his bulk, Viveca moved one step out of Rutt's path, allowing the slight movement to add momentum to the sudden pivot of his upper body and the piston strength of his long arms. With a grunt, he brought the butt of the Hapan rifle squarely down on the nerve cluster at the base of Rutt's skull. The enormous Houk went down like a wet sack of bantha feed.

Noone reached the rack, yanked loose something resembling a crossbow, and spun around to take aim at Viveca. He then realized

two things: The Krish already had him covered, and the crossbow wasn't loaded.

"Perhaps this will be enjoyable after all," Viveca smiled. "I suggest you start running."

Soaked with sweat, Kels disappeared into the shadow of the formidably armed luxury yacht berthed at Docking Pad P13. When they'd stolen the ship from a gangster, it had been known as the *Asaari Wind*. In the month since, it had quickly run through *Hieroglyph*, *Tailchaser*, and *Voona's Dream II*. Currently the transponder identified it as the pleasure boat *Spiraling Shape*.

Kels clomped up the entry ramp and eased a satchel off one shoulder. A glance at the swollen clouds assured her another shower was imminent, and she rapidly punched today's keycode into the lock controlling the access hatch. The lock deliberated a moment, accepted the new numbers, and rolled the portal open with a hydraulic whine.

A billow of cool, dry air washed across her face as she stepped inside, but she winced at a tenacious stench reminiscent of putrefying goat cheese. Despite days of oxy recycling, they'd been unable to remove the last traces of Kothlis' peculiar atmosphere from the main cabin's air supply. Kels strode to the far wall and

punched the vent fans up to full.

Sonax looked up from her spot at the tech station. "What took sssso long?" she hissed over the roar of the fans. A Sluissi, she possessed a sinuous serpentine tail in place of legs. Her BioTech Aj⁶ cyborg headband also made her a capable computer slicer. "And where isss Dawson?"

"Nice to see you too, Sunshine," Kels quipped, flopping into an acceleration couch. "You know, do you come in any other style besides 'irked and bothered?'"

"Look who isss talking," Sonax muttered as she slithered to the wall and tapped the fans back down to their original setting. "We have a problem."

The hatch whirled open once more and Dawson padded into the cabin, panting. "Gahl!" he exclaimed as he sniffed the air with his damp black nose. "We didn't get rid of that yet?"

"What took you?" Kels asked. "I thought you were right behind me."

Dawson paused. "I picked up a sack of maraffa twigs." He fumbled through one duffel and removed a bundle of thin sticks packed in an oil-stained paper bag. "See?" he declared, holding the white sack up for inspection. He shook loose one of the smooth twigs as he crossed the room and turned the fans up to maximum. Sonax threw up both hands with irritation.

"Lisssten, both of you," she announced. "Noone was due to check in thirty minutesss ago. According to my receiver, his comlink isn't jussst inactive—it's been dessstroyed."

"Destroyed?" Kels echoed with alarm.

"Jussst so. Yet I do not think he is dead. I am monitoring the estate's EM emissions. Viveca has activated his hunting grounds and placed perimeter defenses on sssstandby. I ssssspect the deal went bad and Noone made the poor decision to escape on foot. If



nutcase sets up a murder and calls it sport. I've seen it played out a hundred times.

he is sstill alive, he will not be for long."

Kels cursed. "The fool. Hoofing it through the forest with a famous hunter trying to take him down. Noone better still have the Gun, or a rescue won't be worth our time."

Dawson, leaning against the bulkhead, appeared to be deep in thought. "Here's what we should do," he suggested, biting the tip off the maraffa twig with his long incisors and sucking out a dollop of sticky orange sap. "Power up the weapons and take the ship in high, parking it just above the manor—"

"Negative," Sonax interrupted. "Viveca isss a paranoid. The 'perimeter defenses' I mentioned consist of two automated turbolasersss and a miniaturized energy ssshield. If we do anything, it has got to be sssneaky."

Kels closed her eyes and sighed through gritted teeth. "Well, that is what thieves do best."

Noone crashed through a bramble thicket, wet branches slapping his face. A steep slope loomed through the bracken; he misjudged his footing and skidded halfway down the muddy bank before breaking his fall against the thick bole of an arboray tree. Shaken, he rested for a moment, chest heaving, head down between his knees.

Viveca's property was divided into distinct terrain zones. Upon leaving the estate Noone had plowed through an interminable stretch of grassland before reaching the relative cover of this deciduous forest. His path thus far was an approximate straight line from the mansion to the nearest edge of the hunting grounds, a length he'd studied on a public map the previous evening and estimated at fifteen kilometers.

The shortest distance was guaranteed to be the most perilous distance, and would undoubtedly be the first place Viveca would come looking for him. But Noone knew when he was playing with a stacked deck. He wasn't about to play hide and seek on the enemy's home turf, and besides, if the Krish was on his way...

Maybe he could do a little card-shifting of his own.

Noone hadn't been boasting back in the game hall—he had seen this scenario before, in countless permutations from hack-job holoflicks to beautifully operatic Rodian dramas. And in every version, he reassured himself, the pursued successfully turned the tables on his pursuer.

Well, Noone remembered with a swallow, not in the Rodian plays...

He knew just what he had to do. Viveca might possess the finest beast-blasters money could buy, but Noone wagered the "seasoned tracker" drivel had been half bluff and half bravado. In fact, he chuckled, when the chips were down the Krish probably had the survival skills of an adolescent nature scout. With new confidence, Noone removed his multitool—the only useful item still on his person—and bent back a tree's firm green branch, testing its springiness and tension.

Never done this before, but how hard can it be? He scanned the snarled undergrowth for a fallen limb and unearthed a solid knot of hardwood, dead but not rotten. Flicking the stud that activated the vibro-edge on the multitool's main blade, he carved the knot into six pieces of roughly equal size. Picking up the first segment, he whittled it down to a sharp point.

The multitool made short work of the task at hand, and Noone

began lashing each skewer to the end of the branch with sinewy stalks of cordgrass. Guileless, he said! I'll ram six chunks of pointed guile right down his fat throat.

The muddy slope would be perfect—Viveca would be watching his feet and wouldn't notice the trap until it was too late. Noone secured the last stake with a double hitch. Surveying the area with a satisfied sigh, he looped a length of cordgrass around his right arm, grasped the spike-studded tree limb, and bent it back away from the hill at nearly a ninety-degree angle. Holding the quivering bough with his left hand, he tried to shake the cordgrass loose from his bicep and failed. Switching tactics, he grabbed the rough bark in his right hand, reached for the cord with his left—

—and was knocked flat on his back as the branch whipped forward, glanced against his shoulder, and disappeared behind him with a scream of torn air. Lying on the embankment, Noone blinked up stupidly at the mottled gray sky. That's not good. Struggling to a sitting position, he looked behind him to discover the limb was cracked, dangling limply by a light twist of fibers. Three of the six spikes were gone. Slag it! I don't have time to make another one!

Then he noticed the blood.

The three missing spikes hadn't gone far at all—they were firmly impaled in his left shoulder. Now this, Noone thought, gritting his teeth, this is much worse. With an agonized cry audible through clamped lips, he wrenched the points loose and staggered weakly to his feet. Okay Junior Woodsman, you just blew your one chance. Clapping his right hand over the wound to staunch the dark flow, Noone jogged off into the thickening trees.

BRZZZZT! Kels rapped her comlink against the hard metal frame of the datapad with equal measures of frustration and desperation. "Try it again, Sonax." Through the hissing and sputtering of her fritzing audio pickup came a faint, faraway voice: "Tesssst..."

Kels pursed her lips. "Now would be a great time to knock off the sibilants. I can hardly tell what's you and what's the static. Dawson!" she called back over her shoulder. "Kick it into gear, would you?"

The Tynnan trotted up to join her, two lumpy duffels slung about his neck and one hold-out blaster strapped to his leg. Kels had insisted that he carry a sidearm for their foray into Viveca's turf, even though Dawson's mastery of lethal devices was limited to explosives containing unpronounceable chemical compounds.

Her boot sank into a shallow peat bog and she pulled it free with a wet sucking gurgle. They'd chosen the shortest stretch of territory—fifteen clicks from the edge to the mansion—but the outer terrain zone was a sodden, brackish, rot-stinking swamp. Her hand cleaved a path through a cobweb barricade strung between two stunted trees and a dark shadow scurried out of sight. The stagnant waters were crawling with furry gray spiders about the size of her hand. She hoped they weren't poisonous.

Kels glanced at the screen of her datapad—still blank. "Sonax," she called into the comlink, "where's that location fix?"

"Working on it," came the distant reply. "Viveca owns a Rodian HT training sssystem—it has sssix independently-controlled repulsorlift drones that are used as targets in tracking exercises. He has ordered them to hunt down Noone and make sssure he

remains in the field of play."

"Any good news?"

"I think I can ssslice into the drones' live data feed. When they know where Noone isss, I'll know

where he isss, meaning you'll know where he isss."

"Dandy," Kels remarked. "Let us know when you've struck crystalline." She thumbed off the comlink. "Dawson, do you think you could—"

"PORTENTS VAGUE, ASK AGAIN LATER."

Kels had her gun in her hand in an instant and dropped into a fighting crouch, holding the weapon steady on the source of the unfamiliar voice. The next moment she lowered her arm, got to her feet, and exploded.

"What in space do you think you're doing? I could have blown a flaming crater right through your tiny speck of a brain!"

Dawson poked his head out from behind the Quay, which he'd thrust out in front of him as an ineffectual shield. "Hey, what's with the hair trigger, here?" he shouted with anger born of fear. "I was just fiddling with it!"

Kels holstered her blaster with a growl. "Now you know why I tossed that thing back in the market. Don't tell me you bought another one."

Dawson shook his head. "It's the same Quay," he sniffed, patting down his ruffled fur. "I got it back from the Squib for three blasting caps and a copper spindle."

"And you could have stolen it for nothing," she countered. "You've got to learn the value of a credit if you want to win in this business." The comlink buzzed. "That's Sonax. Put that thing away if you don't want to fish it out of a bog."

She switched on the speaker and caught Sonax in mid-sentence. "—broken into the visssual data feed of one drone. It isss a passive link only—I cannot influence the drone's flight path. Sssstandby."

Kels whistled with surprise. "Not bad. Let's hold this position. Looks like we might get lucky and save ourselves a lot of pointless legwork."

The intermittent bubbling of the soggy mire seemed to grow louder in the sudden stillness. A few of the largest water-spiders hopped closer, broad footpads supporting their weight atop the swamp's grimy film. A sweeping splash from Kels' foot sent them scattering into the tangled shadows beneath the trees' shadowy roots. Dawson tapped his short claws rhythmically against the metal clasp of his satchel strap and stared absently into the vaporous mist. After several minutes passed without incident, the abrupt crackle of the active comlink made them both jump.

"Kelsss..."

"I'm here. What've you got?"

"The drone hasss picked up two targets—a human and an alien—and is moving to intercept."

"A human and an alien," Kels repeated, looking hopefully at Dawson. "That's gotta be Noone and the Krish. Where are they?"

"They cannot be far from your current possition. The drone is accelerating and powering up its blassster. It is currently less than three hundred meters to the northeassst."

"Three hundred?" Dawson said, surprised. "Why, that's practically nothing. We can be there in a flash."

"Hold on ... it isss two hundred." Kels and Dawson glanced at each other, puzzled.

"Or less than two hundred," Sonax continued. "More like one-fifty. No, wait. Use one-twenty. Ninety. Sssixty. Thirty. Oh, sssskrank—"

The bullet-bodied HT drone burst into the clearing amid a shower of loose leaves, firing madly as it raced through its initial pass. Kels instinctively dived head-first toward the mud, drawing her blaster as she fell and managing to snap off a few shots in the direction of the silver-plated killer, all of which went wide. The drone's furious spray of scarlet energy converged on Dawson. Several bolts impacted one of the satchels slung over his chest, burning three dark holes in the canvas and sending the Tynnan skidding through the water and into a fen-rotted log with a wet crunch. The drone continued its flight through the clearing, disappearing into the mist at the far side.

Kels, face down in the sludge, could still hear the whine of its compact repulsoflight as she pulled herself into a crouch. The sound faded, but shrieked suddenly as the high-boost engine came back online for round two. Kels spared a quick glance over at Dawson—not moving—and brought her blaster to bear as the machine zipped back into view. The drone spat red darts at her position and she squeezed the trigger. Her weapon wheezed and dislodged a glop of doughy clay.

Crying out in frustration, Kels kicked both feet with frantic strength, launching herself backward as a volley of bolts sizzled into the watery murk where she had been crouching a moment before. She readied her arm to throw her useless blaster at the oncoming hunter, knowing it would buy her little more than a second.

An unexpected shot erupted from the side, burning past her ear. Dawson stood unsteadily on both feet, clutching his blaster pistol in both paws and discharging a sloppy spray of fire that wasn't even close to its target. The drone made a few simple attitude jigs in its flight, spinning into a tight barrel roll and easily avoiding the clumsy threat. Once again its course took it to the edge of the clearing and it disappeared behind the gray curtain.

Dawson blinked frantically in a vain attempt to clear his head. His chest flashed with stabbing pain as he sucked in a shredded breath. Cocking his ears—for his treacherous vision appeared to be serving up doubles of everything—Dawson shakily held the blaster on the approximate point where he guessed the HT drone would reappear. The weapon was much heavier than he'd remembered, and seemed to deliver more of a kick, too. He deployed his thick tail behind himself as a brace.

Once more the drone tore through the treeline, at a higher angle this time, not at all where Dawson was aiming. His panicked answering shot, however, was so woefully off-target that it nearly succeeded in grazing the droid's durasteel casing through perverse luck alone. The tracker unit plunged to evade the salvo, getting off a few potshots of its own as Dawson poured more awkward fire in the direction of the destroyer. If it had been equipped with a vocabulator, the drone would have issued a contemptuous snort as it launched into a nimble zigzag and lined up a shot that would bore a hole in the Tynnan's left eye socket. Its starboard maneuvering jet hissed as the droid lurched in for the kill.

With an inarticulate scream, Kels swung her scavenged stick like a smashball mallet. The droid's sensor-studded nose impacted the flattest surface of the knotty branch with a force of 20 kilograms per square centimeter. With an agonized electronic squeal audible even above the reverberating CLANG of rattled metal, the HT drone sailed back the way it had come in a graceful ten-meter arc. The weak splashdown seemed rather vulgar by comparison.

Gasping, Kels approached Dawson, pulled the blaster from his unprotesting fingers, and strode over to the spot where the silver droid lay twitching in the mire. Its servos whined as it madly flailed its limbs in an attempt to right itself. Kels made an adjustment to the blaster's power setting, took deliberate aim at her target, and blasted the drone to superheated shrapnel at point-blank range.

She looked back at her companion. "You're welcome, by the way," she managed, panting. "What's the damage?"

Dawson poked his head inside his newly-perforated satchel and let out a horrified squeal. "Oh Fates! This is awful!"

"I didn't mean the bag, I meant you. I thought the drone had punctured you for sure." She walked up to Dawson and reached behind the ruined neck satchel, carefully running her fingers through his chest fur. The Tynnan cheeped with pain and pulled his face from the sack. "Take it easy!"

Kels nodded. "Bruised ribs. I'd guess these lower two are broken. The fur's burnt away here, here, and here. If it weren't for that satchel, you'd be breathing through your ribcage."

"But look!" Dawson wailed, holding out the sack. "One bolt fused the comp-timer and another popped the ionizer! These were all my triggers and detonators, and now they're circuit wiped!"

"That's all your detonators? What's in the other sack?"

"Putty, thermite gel, shaped detonite, raw baradium, a few vials of nergon, all the explosives. But I can't set 'em off without an electronic trigger!"

Kels snorted as she broke open a field medkit and peeled the protective backing from a strip of synthflesh. "You're not good for much then, are you? Maybe if another HT drone shows up you can catch it in that sack, tie off the end, and bring it back to the ship as a pet."

She handed the synthflesh to Dawson, who grudgingly took it. Both thieves headed back into the thick of the swamp to continue their search-and-rescue.

"Dawson—by any chance, did those laser blasts slag the Great and Powerful Quay?"

"Nope. It's in the other bag."

"Stang."

Rocks. First grassland, then forest, now a vast tumble of ruddy boulders, some the size of a cargo freighter. Scrub vegetation peeked out between the sheltered cracks and occasionally a hard-shelled arthropod flashed from a tiny bore-hole. Noone had long

since given up estimating how much money it would take to terraform a region to such a degree. One point three million was loose change, he fumed. The cheapskate.

The makeshift bandages wrapped around his shoulder, hastily crafted from the ragged strips of his jacket sleeves, were black with encrusted blood. His boot soles scraped against the stony surface as he tried to summit a gargantuan slab, a task made all the more difficult with only a single functional arm.

Noone reached the zenith, looked down at a sheer three-meter drop, and jumped. He hit the surface and a chuff of air involuntarily escaped his lips. Strangely, the ground looked artificially smooth and sounded hollow. Noone advanced several paces, saw another, shorter drop, and hopped down.

He'd been standing on a cage. The solid durasteel sheets composing the rear and sides were partially buried, but the front—a wide panel of tightly meshed squares—was fully exposed. Realizing he had to keep moving but curious in spite of himself, Noone placed his face up to the grid and peered inside.

Something slammed against the door with a crash and a sizzle. Terrified, Noone took a step back-

ward, tripped on a stone, and landed flat on his backside. The thing retreated into the darkness at the rear of the box as angry yellow sparks played across the surface of the mesh.

A force cage. Designed to deliver an incapacitating stun shock to any prisoner who attempted escape. Noone had seen plenty of them throughout his lifetime and had even been locked inside one during a disastrous early burglary. The standard factory-installed locks were fairly easy to defeat.

He stood and placed one hand safely against the interlacing bars. The shock charge in a force cage was projected across the interior surface only. The caged beast stirred and turned its head—if one could call it a head—in his direction.

It was a lamproid. The other lamproid, Noone reminded himself, the female that Viveca was arrogantly saving for future vengery. The primitive creature was utterly hideous, a parasitic intestinal worm that nature had insanely blessed with a colossal frame and a predator's instincts. Its oily gray skin was blemished with crosshatched electrical burns. The floor of the narrow enclosure swam with fetid animal waste, blood, and bile.

The lamproid drew its barbed face up to the mesh, across from Noone's palm. The metallic grid began to hum dangerously but the creature stopped short of the crippling stun field. A tiny wet filament curled from between two yellowed fangs and quivered in the air as if sampling Noone's scent. Abruptly the appendage retracted. The beast reared back and seemed to take careful stock of its visitor.

A bothersome itch attacked the nape of Noone's neck. He raised his good arm to scratch until he realized the tickle was emanating from inside his skull. The creeping sensation slowly spread across the top half of his brain as if probing for a way inside. He stared back at the lamproid, fascinated. Telepathy, or something else?



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can catch it in that
sack, tie off the end,
and bring it back to
the ship as a pet**

The tingling grew stronger, more insistent, until it felt as if a flapping moon moth had crawled in his ear and become trapped in his cranium. An instant later, twin

streaks of warmth shot from the top of his spine and the fingertips of his left hand. Both streams followed bone and converged at his shoulder, generating a hot glow that made a slow turn around the injured joint. Noone was dimly aware of his pulse pounding.

The alien perception gently withdrew, and with it went most of Noone's pain. Astonished, he held up his arm and made a fist. Fresh blood oozed from the puncture wounds and glistened on the soiled bandages. Oops. That didn't heal it, just made it easier to bear. He pressed down on the dressings and looked back at his benefactor. "Uh ... thanks. Thank you."

The lamproid didn't move. Noone felt an uncomfortable pressure behind his eyes, like the onset of a sinus headache. Words leapt unbidden to his tongue.

"You have to get out of there."

More pressure.

"I will open this door."

A gentle yank carried Noone over to the lock. His consciousness watched from a faraway place as his hands fumbled with his multitool and extended the hole punch. Child's play. A simple jig in the input slot disabled the stun field; a thrust-and-lift unlatched the bolt. The door swung open with a squeak.

Still unsure what had just transpired, Noone watched as the lamproid vanished into the undergrowth.

The nashtah strained at the leash. Its six taloned paws dug eagerly at the moist soil as it snuffled a heap of fallen leaves. Picking up the scent, the animal raised its chunky head and bayed with perfect joy. The howl cut off in a strangled urf as Viveca jerked on the taut lead. "Heel!" he barked.

The forest zone had ended. Ahead of them, in an abrupt, obviously unnatural division, stretched the boulder zone. Thousands of titanic rocks lay piled in a vast jumble, some stacked atop one another like children's building blocks, others scattered randomly as if dropped from orbit. The hunt would be more difficult through here, but only slightly. Viveca doubted his prey had the sense to seek out the underground cave networks he had modeled after Trammic mome warrens, even though the entrances were obvious and they offered excellent cover. No, Noone would surely keep to the same straight-line path he'd followed thus far. It was a pity his landscape contractor hadn't gotten around to installing the spewing lava spouts.

Viveca wrapped the nashtah's leash around his left wrist and transferred his heavy blaster rifle to the same hand. Wordlessly, he held out his empty palm. Rutt, the Houk manservant, removed a datapad-sized tracking device from his overstuffed equipment pack and handed it to his master.

The Rodian Hunter-Trainer drone system was proving a major disappointment. Viveca tapped a command into the device and read the scrolling data. Two of the droids had found nothing, one had returned to the manor to fix its faulty repulsorlift engine, one was stuck in a strangletorn patch not more than a klik from here, and the last—well, that one appeared to have vanished entirely. He would certainly have words with his Rodian arms dealer when they next crossed paths.

Sometimes, the Krish decided, it was impossible to beat a trained Dravian hound, a loyal porter, and an afternoon of fresh air. The old ways were still the best.

Still glancing at the drones' status report, Viveca shook the nashtah's leash and clicked his tongue. The animal leapt up and jubilantly pulled forward, clambering over the first column of stones. Viveca smiled. It was often difficult to follow a scent over rocky terrain, but Noone had been leaking blood ever since the onset of the forest tract. A spiked branch! Oh, it was rich. For someone to assume he would be taken in by such a prank was laughable; for the trap to backfire on such a person was hilarious. The final confrontation would be a delight. Well, Mr. Noone, it appears the hunt is at an end ... much like your life. No, he wanted something snappy, something memorable. A merry chase, Mr. Noone, but—

A dark twist erupted from the rocks ahead and shot forward with a sonic crack. Faster than the eye could follow, the attenuated blur launched itself at Rutt, who was standing directly in its path. In the same instant a loop of tight coils swung toward the startled nashtah like a hangman's noose.

Viveca's breath seized in his throat and he let the datascreen fall from his fingers.

One end of the indistinct attacker reached Rutt's chest and kept moving in a clean surgical stab through multiple layers of bone and cartilage. A barbed tail emerged from the center of the field

backpack, flashed wetly in the light, and withdrew before Rutt's reflexes could mount a response. The Houk's hands went belatedly to the hole in his heart and his knees buckled.

Viveca shifted the blaster rifle to his right hand and started to bring the nose up.

The furious tangle wrapped around the nashtah and exploded outward, snapping the leash and propelling the yipping hound into the air. A severed leg spun crazily toward the treeline.

Viveca brought the weapon to bear and readied a shot. With a boiling hiss, the creature fell upon him.

Heaving rings of flesh enveloped the Krish with lightning speed and pitiless strength. The monster looped around his torso—pinning his gun arm—and brought its razor-toothed mouth forward in a predatory death strike. Viveca's left hand shot up and intercepted the demon's head just centimeters from the soft folds of his jugular area.

The two stood locked in a silent combat of wills. Viveca's fingers dug into the beast's hot skin while its coils shifted and flowed along his body. The vice-hold on his blaster faltered and



Well, Mr. Noone, the hunt is at an end ... much like your life. No, he wanted something snappy, something memorable.

the Krish nearly yanked his weapon free. In response, the muscular rings clamped down and tightened their suffocating grip. The nightmare face drew closer, its rings of shredder teeth churning, and a quivering drop of clouded venom beaded at the tip of one fang. Viveca's arm shuddered with exertion.

Letting loose a tormented grunt, Viveca budged the laser cannon one centimeter, then another. The serpentine horror constricted still further. The blaster continued to work loose in tiny jerks. Viveca felt an unbearable pressure building inside his skull.

With a final, agonized wrench, the Mark II came free. Realizing its sudden peril, the beast loosened its coils and brought its tail stinger back for an eviscerating swipe at its enemy's belly. Something popped inside Viveca's brain and a trickle of blood ran from his nostril.

His grip didn't slacken. Viveca placed the rifle's wide barrel against the creature's chin and fired.

A roar of energy immolated the organic chunk and streaked up to the sky as a pillar of flame. The headless corpse went limp and Viveca dropped it to the ground. A pathetic finger of smoke wafted up from the ash-cauterized stump that had once been a neck.

Disgusted, Viveca kicked the lamproid's motionless remains. The struggle had cost him a trophy head.

From somewhere behind the nearest cluster of stone blocks the nashtah growled and barked with pain. Rutt lay facedown in the gravel and, by the looks of the exit wound, would never stir again.

A manservant dead, a hound crippled, a lamproid wasted, and a perfectly splendid afternoon spoiled. Viveca's eyes smoldered.

Noone had a great deal to answer for.

Whatever magic elixir the lamproid had willed into his shoulder had a pretty weak duration time. Or perhaps the numbing effect lessened with distance. Either way, the joint was throbbing as painfully as ever when Noone entered the jungle zone.

Bambooi reeds sprouted from the spongy soil in close bundles of ten or more. Other stalks, apparently a different breed, had diameters in excess of sixty centimeters at the base and spread into four tapering branches as they fought for the sky. The thicket stretched several meters above his head and swayed slightly as a breeze rustled the trembling clusters of starburst leaves. In some spots, the shoots grew so closely together that forward passage was impossible. Noone weaved through the gaps wherever they appeared and kept one eye on the position of the sun. He was forced to double back on his course four times in the first twenty minutes and was much relieved when, after a frustrating fifth dead end, he stumbled across what looked like a trail.

The path, little more than a meter wide, ran in a relative straight line directly on the heading he needed to follow. Amazed at his good fortune, Noone broke into a weary jog.

A sudden thought brought him up short. Why was there a trail here? It was far too clean to be a natural result of the bambooi's growth pattern. Since Viveca had engineered his hunting grounds to his personal specifications, he must also have designed this trail. And Viveca wasn't the type to make things easy for his playthings.

Cautiously, Noone crept forward, scanning the ground and the

shoots on each side for anything that looked out of place. After he'd gone a short distance without incident, the path abruptly doubled in width. He stopped before a small circular clearing. The path continued on its opposite edge.

The perfect spot for a booby trap. The soil at the edge of the clearing looked rough and disturbed, and the dead reeds piled at the center appeared to have been cut with a vibroblade. Though Noone had never encountered one in life, every child who'd ever read an adventure serial was familiar with a Ralltiir tiger pit.

Noone chuckled. He, at least, was no fool. Backtracking several paces, he began searching for a gap in the reed clusters that would allow him to bypass the entire clearing. Moving quickly—for perhaps the covered pit was designed to slow him down as much as catch him—he squeezed between two stalks and picked his way forward.

Considering he'd left the main thoroughfare, the way was surprisingly easy going. It almost seemed as if he'd found an overgrown game run. The thought didn't reassure him, and he considered striking back for the main path. He should be past the trap by now...

One step brought him up to the edge of a tiny pocket clearing; the second step carried him inside it before he could stop himself. Immediately, an invisible hand yanked him to the flat ground with such savagery his teeth shoveled a spray of dirt down the back of his throat.

What happened? Noone raised his head, spat out the gritty mouthful, and came to the sickening realization that he couldn't move the rest of his body. He'd been paralyzed. The impact had ruptured his spinal column.

Hold on, Noone reminded himself. No need to panic. His bleak diagnosis must be flawed, since he could clearly see his fingers twitching. He swept both forearms back and forth across the soil then wiggled his feet experimentally. A distant rustle answered him.

Not paralysis, then. But something was pinning his thighs and torso to the ground with an inhuman strength. It felt as if an industrial freight hauler had parked on his back.

With a groan, he realized the truth. A man trap. A one-meter square metal slab rigged with gravfield generators. Unlike standard repulsorlifts, which pushed against a planet's mass and allowed landspeeders to float, grav generators intensified the local gravity by a factor of eight. Once seized by a man trap, not even a Wookiee could fight his way free.

But it couldn't hurt to try. A sustained push with his palms gained him nothing and brought about further agony in his injured left arm. Inexplicably, the relatively minor effort left him unable to draw a breath. Noone quickly tried to remember everything he'd heard or read about man traps.

The news wasn't encouraging. Though advertised as a safe, non-lethal way to subdue a fleeing target, the Ubrikkian R-TechApp model had a number of detrimental side effects. Once pinned, a victim's lungs struggled to expand under conditions they were never designed to handle. The pumping of a heart became a laborious task to stave off cardiac arrest. Vital fluids toiled through grav-compressed passages and could burst under the strain. Eventually blood would begin to puddle in abdominal organs and the brain would shut down from lack of oxygen. Any

bounty hunter who left a man trap unattended would return to find a dead mark.

Not very sporting, is it? Noone wondered if Viveca's love for

bloodsport would be satisfied by a finding a helpless victim choking on his own bile. He doubted it would, and that bothered him. Of course, like the tiger pit, Viveca's fun might lie in discovering whether Noone could avoid the trap in the first place. He hadn't. The hunt was over.

Or was it? Was this another test of wits? Noone twisted his neck and scanned the brush. The Ubrikkian R-TechApp came with a remote activator and a 10-meter activation cord. It had to be close, and—there!

To his left, wedged between a crowd of slender reeds just under two meters distant, glinted the silver plasteel of the remote activator. Its surprising proximity both puzzled and reassured Noone. Viveca could have buried the device well over the next rise. Instead, he'd placed it here—in sight and out of reach.

The activation cable was likely plugged in to the closest corner. Noone's left hand scrabbled along the trap's smooth edge and located the attachment socket. A yank on the cord pulled it free from the shallow layer of dirt that had hidden it and caused the activator to slide forward a centimeter or two.

The activation cord and grav plate were firmly bolted together. Noone knew he'd never separate them without a set of tools, but tried anyway without success.

He pulled on the cord to bring the activator closer but the device was blocked behind a tangle of reeds. Breaking the cable was out of the question.

A breeze swept through the clearing, cooling his sweat-stained face and bringing with it a sound that chilled him even further. The distant baying of Viveca's nashtah.

Think, think! His multitool, tucked away in a pants pocket, might as well be on the dark side of Kabal's moon. He couldn't drag the activator into his grasp. Could he extend something over to the activator?

He scanned the ground again. No rocks, no wires, no spools of fibercord. Around him, the bamboo shoots were the thickness of tree trunks. Except, that is, for the underbrush. Stretching out his arm with a groan, Noone closed his right hand around a clump of tiny seedlings and pulled them out by the roots.

The effort triggered an explosion of suffering in his chest and he squeezed his eyes shut until the agony subsided. His heart palpitated in weak shivering flutters.

Each stem was as long as his forearm, as wide as his finger, and slightly tapered near the tip. What's more, each was hollow and surprisingly rigid. Noone broke the root segment off one plant and fitted the remainder onto the top of a second stem. The double-length pointer felt light in his hands and showed no sign of bending.

He added two more shoots, then stretched out to pluck more. Fireworks popped behind his eyes. He tried to swallow but couldn't, and fluid leaked from his mouth. Another stalk painstakingly joined the interlocking pole.

His legs, at the point where his knees left the grav plate, felt as if some fiend were amputating them with a plasma torch. Similar

lines of fire burned across his upper chest. With a start, Noone realized that the man trap was actually keeping blood away from his punctured shoulder. If the wound had fallen inside the grav field when he'd been pulled to the ground, he would already have hemorrhaged to death.

One final stem. With quaking hands, Noone lifted the swaying two-meter stick. In one of the small miracles that sometimes befall career gamblers, it didn't break.

He shakily guided the prod toward the activator. As he tried to steady its path, dark blotches appeared at the edges of his vision, a shrill screech rang in his ears, and his pain eased tremendously, which terrified him most of all. It meant he was mere moments from unconsciousness.

The stick stretched out toward the intensity control on top of the activator. If he could dial it down to two or three gees, he should be able to roll off the grav plate. The sun suddenly went dark.

Concentrate, please concentrate, he willed himself. It's just you and the branch, the branch and the dial. Nothing else matters. The bamboo tip clanged uselessly off the base of the activator. Noone pulled it back for another try. Wobbling with tension, the pointer brushed delicately against plasteel—

A furred, mud-encrusted foot stomped down and snapped the rod cleanly in two.

Noone blinked and a shape swam into focus. "Dawson!" he roared, infuriated. "You broke my stick!"

The Tynnan looked down at his feet, opened his mouth in a silent "O" of surprise, and said something muffled and distant. Noone could no longer hear anything save the thundering of blood through his eardrums. An indistinct pale figure moved behind Dawson and pointed a blaster, and the activator vanished in a soundless flash of light.

Blessed relief inundated his flattened body and he willingly slipped into oblivion.

Noone came to with a spastic twitch and an involuntary gasp. His hands slapped at his face as he batted away the small vial Kels held beneath his nose. "Enough!" he croaked. "What is that stuff?"

Kels shrugged. "Chemical smelling salts, looks like. From the medkit. We've got to keep moving if we want to stay ahead of your friend, and I'm not about to drag you."

"You might have to," Noone said gravely. "That grav field did a number on everything except my hairstyle." He looked back at the deactivated man trap. "How did you find me?"

"Take the shortest distance and run it in a beeline, that looked to be about your style. We had our own adventures along the way."

Noone looked around. "Where'd Dawson go?"

"He's hoping he can set up an ambush, but his explosives are useless without a detonator. Noone—what happened to the Gun of Command?"

"Kid, if I still had the Gun, Viveca would be here right now masaging my toes. I doubt we'll ever see it again."

Cold fury was evident in the set of her eyes, though she bit back the angry retort that formed in her brain. "I see," she managed instead, her voice icy.

Noone watched her carefully. There was a chance they could

eventually recover the weapon if Viveca put it back into circulation on the arms market. They could even put together a plan for robbing the manor. But there was no sense going into detail when a more pressing concern was headed their way.

"We'd better make tracks," Kels finally conceded, consulting her datapad. "Sonax made a rough estimate of the Krish's position by tracing a drone signal back to his handheld transmitter. He's less than ten minutes away."

Noone groaned as his young accomplice helped him to his feet. Somehow, he'd have to find a bacta tank.

Dawson emerged from the dense thicket a bit farther up the trail.

"Let's move," he announced. "It's unstable, but it's the best I could do since somebody slagged the circuits in the man trap."

"What did you—"

"C'mon! This thing's motion-sensitive and I don't know how long it'll last!"

"Dawson—"

"Gol Gol Gol!" The Tynnan broke into a run.

Tyro Viveca strode purposely forward, a creature of pure rage. That preposterous human had humiliated him, robbed him of a valued servant, and nearly gotten him killed. And the irony was that, without a doubt, the little dunce had no idea what he had truly done.

An intelligent opponent would have formulated a plan for turning the lamproid against his pursuer; Noone had just opened the door and uncorked a bottle of random lightning. Viveca spat at the ground with manifest contempt. That Noone hadn't been killed himself was a miracle, and Viveca had no tolerance for "lucky" dunces. Each footfall took him one step closer to his rightful prize.

The nashtah sniffed the ground around the bambooi stalks.

Though its leash had been ruined in the attack and subsequently discarded, the loss of its middle right leg seemed to have cured the beast of its overanxious tendency to run ahead. Dravian hounds were known for their

rugged constitutions and this one had recovered from its partial dismemberment in minutes. Before it would continue, however, the animal had viciously disemboweled the six-meter carcass of its attacker. Despite the wasted seconds, Viveca had allowed it. He could think of no aesthetic use for lamproid skin without a head to accompany it.

The limping nashtah followed the scent onto the main trail. Viveca smiled. Had his prey fallen into the tiger pit? It would be delicious to see Noone impaled on a bed of vibro-stakes, but Viveca rather hoped the human had landed safely and pulled loose one of the spikes to use as a hand weapon. He pictured himself snatching the spike out of his opponent's hands, then gutting his astonished foe from belly to neck.

Surprisingly, however, the scent quickly led off the track and back into the thicket. The nashtah disappeared among the stalks and Viveca followed with measured steps. This could be even

more delightful, he thought, as he recognized the overgrown and nearly nonexistent run. Now he would gauge Noone's true worth. It would be a pity if the human had already expired from gravitic distress, but Viveca could live with that. Such a death was invariably lingering and painful.

It occurred to him to call back the nashtah lest it be injured by the man trap, but as he rounded a bend he realized his caution was unnecessary. The durasteel activation plate lay on the ground, inactive and unoccupied. The hound was busily pawing at the reeds on the opposite side. Puzzled, Viveca stepped forward to examine the remote activator. Nothing remained of the device save a burnt fistful of dull melted alloy.

A blaster shot! Noone had accomplices! Cursing, he shouldered his rifle and scanned the trail for a surprise ambush. Nothing happened, and Viveca realized that the fugitives would have fled in panic at the earliest opportunity.

His opponent had cheated! The thought ran through his mind with such palpable disgust it approached physical nausea. Lack of ability he could understand. Stupidity even, in a pitying way. But poor sportsmanship? Never. He would find everyone involved and flay their hides with a high-intensity laser.

The nashtah, yapping feverishly at him, appeared to have picked up a scent. It pressed through the growth until only its rear set of legs were visible, trembling with anticipation and shaking the pale shoots violently. Viveca thought he heard nearby voices.

Fools. His lips curled in a triumphant sneer as he crept closer. Sad fools.

Yes indeed. A deep male voice was distinctly emanating from the copse just ahead, though he couldn't quite make out what it was saying. Viveca readied his weapon and parted the pliant shoots separating him from his trophy.

His eyes took in the tableau in an instant.

A white plastic ball, a child's toy, nestled in a bambooi cradle. "OUTLOOK NOT SO GOOD."

Two copper wires snaking into the toy's exposed innards, glued in place against the sound chip with what looked like orange maraffa sap.

"OUTLOOK NOT SO GOOD."

Both golden filaments spilling to the ground and running up against—

"OUTLOOK NOT SO GOOD."

—A melon-sized wad of detonite tape.

The nashtah whined. Viveca grimaced.

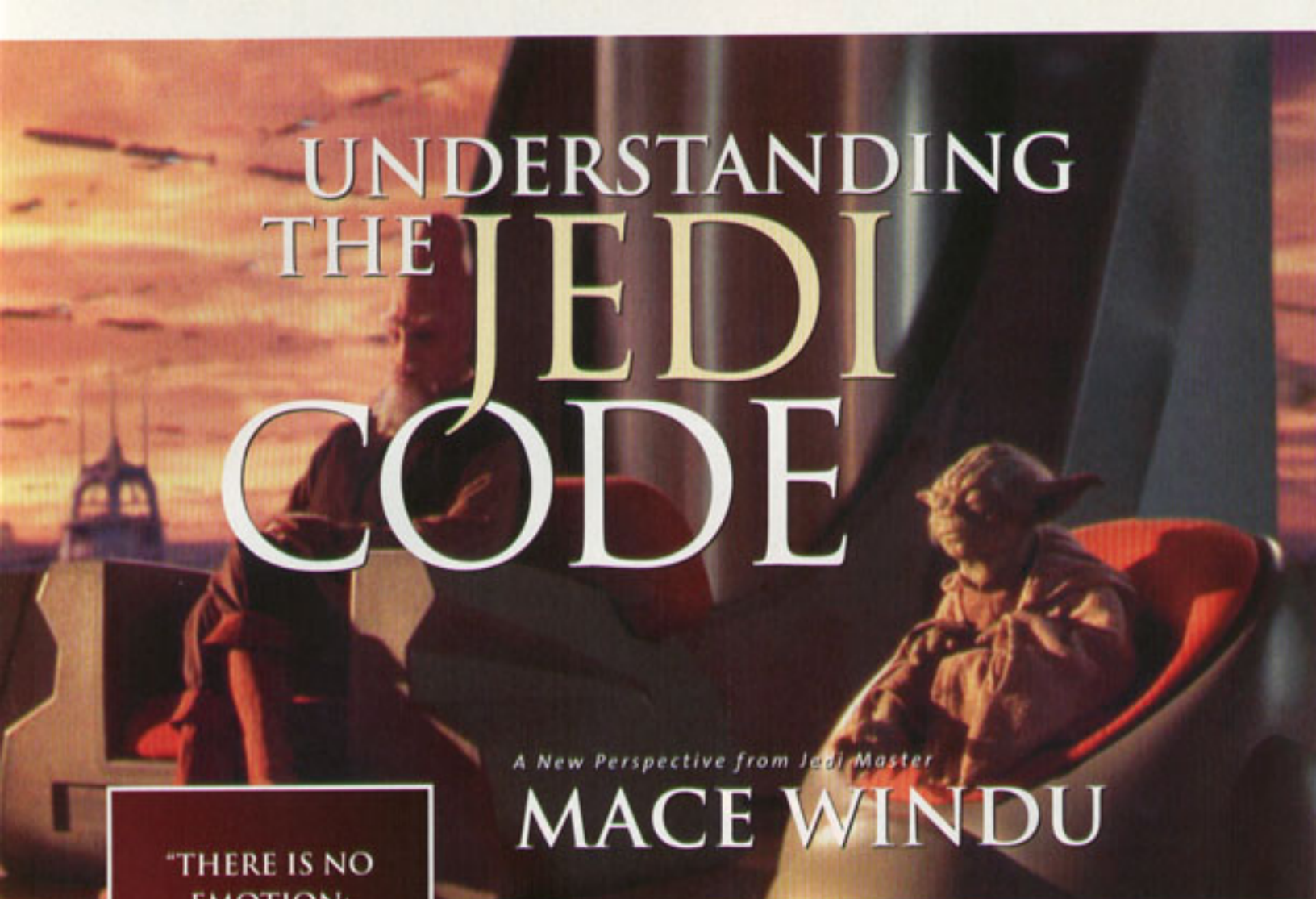
The explosion neatly flattened four hectares of bambooi.

"Bacta was a miraculous panacea. It had cured plagues. It had healed the nearly dead. It had changed the face of modern medicine. Trouble was, it was almost criminally expensive.

Military goons took quality medical care for granted. Hass Sonax hissed to herself. For a no-name thief with uncertain credit and nonexistent insurance, the medcenters of Kabal might as well be impregnable castle keeps. Well, there was no other way—they'd have to create a false admissions record in the city's central



**Noone had uncorked
a bottle of random
lightning. Viveca spat
at the ground with
manifest contempt.**



UNDERSTANDING THE JEDI CODE

A New Perspective from Jedi Master

MACE WINDU

"THERE IS NO
EMOTION;
THERE IS PEACE.

THERE IS NO
IGNORANCE;
THERE IS
KNOWLEDGE.

THERE IS NO
PASSION;
THERE IS
SERENITY.

THERE IS NO
DEATH;
THERE IS
THE FORCE."

THE JEDI CODE

TRANSLATION BY J D WIKER

"Certainly a Jedi should know the Code, by word and by heart. But seemingly every Jedi is in some fashion negligent, from the lowest Padawan to the highest Master. Consequently, were someone to demand, 'What is the true meaning of the Jedi Code?' the Jedi who promptly answered would be rare indeed.."

SO BEGINS THE FAMOUS COMMENTARY UPON THE JEDI Code by Master Odan-Urr, written almost four thousand years ago. His musings on the proper behavior of a Jedi have formed the foundation of today's Jedi Order.

Odan-Urr's ancient wisdom has held true for centuries. Many are taught the Jedi Code, but few fully understand it. Fewer still live by it. Those who do are truly Jedi Masters. Full comprehension of the Code, then, is the key to unlocking the Force.

The Path Within the Code

At its most basic level, the Jedi Code is a set of guidelines explaining for a Padawan what virtues to prize, and what flaws to avoid. Instructors ask their students that if they remember nothing else, to always keep these words in mind. The reason is simple: in

these four lines lie the instructions for how to become a Jedi Master.

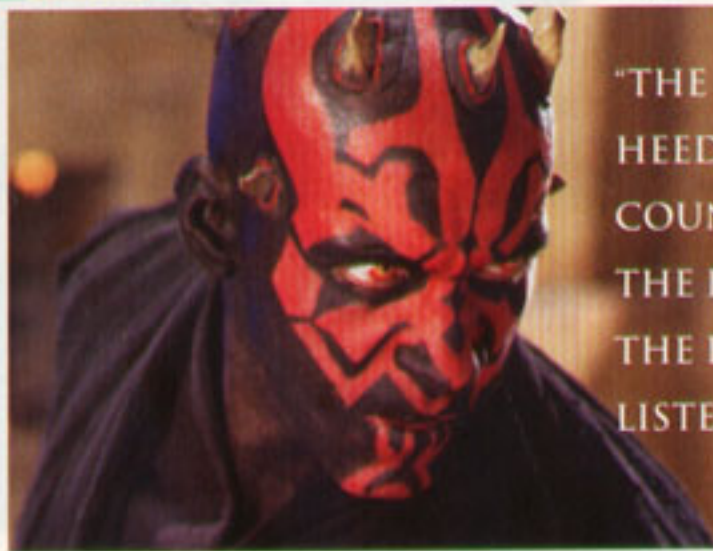
Consider the first rule: "There is no emotion; there is peace." It is plainly a contrast, distinguishing the confusion of emotional considerations from the clear thinking of peaceful meditation—obviously, a valuable quality.



But if that peace is rooted in simply being unaware of some factor that would otherwise cause a Jedi to feel an emotional reaction, then it is not so much peace as ignorance. This is why the Code contains the second rule: "There is no ignorance; there is knowledge."

This teaches Jedi to strive for understanding of all situations—particularly before acting—to better avoid errors in judgment. But, again, knowing a thing well can lead one to become engrossed in it. Engrossment leads to clouding of the mind. Thus, the third rule: "There is no passion; there is serenity." Knowing a thing objectively is knowing it as the Force knows it.

Still, students commonly argue that the only true objectivity is nonexistence—death. For does one not affect a thing even by merely observing it? This is why there is the fourth rule: "There is no death; there is the Force." The Force knows all things objectively, it is serene, and it is not swayed by emotion.



"THE JEDI WHO
HEEDS NOT THE
COUNSEL OF
THE FORCE, TO
THE DARK SIDE
LISTENS."

—YODA

Thus, the Jedi Code teaches that before undertaking any action, the Jedi should consider the will of the Force. Master Odan-Urr said: "With these other considerations aside, all that remains is the Force." What he meant by this was that if a Jedi can act emotionlessly, knowledgeably, and serenely, then he is acting in accordance with the will of the Force.

Therefore, if a Jedi acts in all things without emotion, ignorance, or passion, then that Jedi is truly a master of the Force.

Interpreting the Code

While the Code is a straightforward map to mastery of the Force, it can sometimes be frustrating to put it into practice. The galaxy

has changed a great deal since the Jedi Code was first defined, and a great deal more since Master Odan-Urr attempted to clarify it. Although the secret to the Code is considering it thoroughly before acting, the universe often does not afford a Jedi the time to do so, before forcing her to act.

Still, a Jedi can think through a great many things in advance, so as to better prepare for when the rest of the universe is in a hurry. Over the millennia since the founding of the Order, Jedi Masters have recognized that there are eight conclusions a Jedi can reach before the situations are thrust upon him. A Jedi who understands these eight things will, when called upon to make a quick decision, already know the will of the Force.

Master Odan-Urr remarked upon some of these items, and the commentaries of

other Jedi Masters over the centuries—including Master Yoda—have formed the basis for the current "expanded code" taught to Jedi Padawans all across the galaxy. Presented below are those eight conclusions.

Meditation

Odan-Urr wrote: "Every Jedi should spend time meditating each day on the will of the Force. The reason is simple: If one has unwittingly acted contrary to the will of the Force, recognizing the mistake soon after might still give one time to make amends."

What Master Odan-Urr left unsaid was that by regularly examining one's own motivations, a Jedi could be certain that

UNDERSTANDING THE JEDI CODE

she was not allowing emotion, ignorance, or passion to intrude upon her clarity. A Jedi who has no time to meditate may more easily become lost. More to the point, a Jedi who refuses to meditate may already know that her motivations are not pure, and is thus lying to herself. As Master Yoda once said: "The Jedi who heeds not the counsel of the Force, to the dark side listens."

Training

Master Vodo said: "A Jedi's training in the Force never ends." A wise Jedi should strive to remember that there is always something more to learn about the Force. The Force reveals itself to those who have the desire and knowledge to see it, and heeding only the Force's will is much the same as looking at a bantha's toe and saying: "Now I understand banthas." To continue to grow, a Jedi should train each day.

Loyalty

Jedi can exist in this universe because the Force exists. But the Jedi Order needs more: it requires loyalty. It goes without saying that Jedi should be loyal to one another, and not squabble or fight. More importantly, though, each Jedi should be aware that he must act in accordance with the wishes of his Master, who must in turn act in accordance with the wishes of the Jedi Council. This is not a question of seniority, but rather of understanding the will of the Force, and in this regard, the members of the Jedi Council are the recognized experts.

REMEMBER THAT BRAVERY ITSELF
IS AN EMOTION, AND A JEDI
SHOULD BE AT PEACE—
EVEN IN THE MIDST
OF WAR.



Integrity

A Jedi's responsibility to the Force is to be honest with himself. This does not mean that he must be forthright with everyone else, however.

Master Odan-Urr lamented the misperceptions of those who believed that Jedi should be morally superior: "Many feel that a Jedi should be scrupulously honest, never taking advantage, and never withholding information. This is nonsense."

From a certain point of view,

a Jedi is not being dishonest if he allows people to believe what they wish to believe. A Jedi can and should offer advice to those who need it, but it is not incumbent upon the Jedi to convince anyone to follow his advice.

In service to the Force, a Jedi may employ deception, subterfuge, misdirection, and even fraud, if he does so with a righteous aim. Although most sentient creatures have a distaste for such practices, the Force is without such emotions.

Do not confuse this with

"moral flexibility." A Jedi does what needs to be done. But also remember that a Jedi is not above the law.

Morality

The most dangerous quotation ever uttered by a Jedi Master is: "A Jedi is not a creature of morals." These words have unfortunately been translated, often by Jedi, to mean that a Jedi can do no wrong.

It actually means that Jedi are not enforcers of morality. While Jedi can bring or restore order and justice, they cannot

themselves sit in judgment of others. There are two reasons for this.

First, the galaxy is a vast place, full of cultures that no one Jedi can completely understand. One famous story tells how a Jedi learned that a companion had been devoured by the cannibalistic Colicoids. When asked why the Jedi later bargained with the very same creatures for starship components, she responded: "Because eating the flesh of sentient creatures is not forbidden by the Jedi Code—but to the Colicoids, not eating the flesh of sentients is considered a sign of insanity."

This Jedi recognized that punishing the Colicoids for acting according to their nature would be acting out of emotion and ignorance. Similarly, not procuring a badly needed engine part would have been punishing herself, out of guilt.

The second reason is that judgement leads to vengeance, and vengeance leads to the dark side. This is easy to understand, though not so easy to practice. Should a known murderer be allowed to go free? Should a man intent on murder be killed? To answer either question, a Jedi must first know the will of the Force. Neither decision can be made hastily, except where lives are threatened by inaction.

Discretion

Though Master Odan-Urr believed in justice, he also understood that it was sometimes necessary for a Jedi to practice discretion: "The galaxy will live in tranquility if certain matters are a bit overlooked or left unheard." Some have seen this as a sign of Jedi partisanship. Others, particularly law enforcement agencies, believe that Jedi ignore small crimes, in order to apprehend greater

criminals. Obviously, neither of these is true.

The truth is that Jedi Knights are suffered throughout the galaxy—despite our facility with the Force. This is because we do not actively interfere with the lives of the common people. Jedi stand for order and justice, and these qualities do not begin with the misdeeds of the few.



A WISE JEDI TRUSTS THE FORCE

The goal of the Jedi should be to create and preserve an atmosphere in which justice can flourish, rather than to try to create justice herself.

Master Yoda has often said that, should the Republic ever challenge the Jedi Order's right to exist, the support of the common citizen will see us through: "If fear us they do, help us they will not. If hate us they do, hunt us they will."

Bravery

Master Odan-Urr once said: "To be brave in battle proves nothing. Bravery itself proves nothing. A Jedi should be prepared to put aside fear, regret, and uncertainty and either fight, run, surrender, or die."

A common mistake among younger Jedi is that bravery is

the opposite of fear, and since fear leads to the dark side, bravery is armor against the dark side. Not so. If a Jedi is mindful of the will of the Force, he will know whether it is best to stand his ground, or flee, or even to offer truce. Remember that bravery itself is an emotion, and a Jedi should be at peace—even in the midst of war.

Fighting

Sadly, we live in a galaxy where conflict is a fact of life for far too many beings for us to remain apart from it. But we need not embrace conflict. Master Odan-Urr said: "If a Jedi ignites his lightsaber, he must be ready to take a life. If he is not so prepared, he must keep his weapon at his side." And as Master Yoda teaches: "If a weapon you show, 'A warrior am I!' you say. And who is best must all other warriors know of you." So, to avoid unnecessary fighting, a Jedi should not advertise his skill.

But when is it necessary to fight? The Force will show a Jedi when he has no other options, and a wise Jedi trusts the Force in this regard.

When fighting, is it neces-

sary to use one's lightsaber? The answer is no. A lightsaber is an intimidating weapon—but it is not a tool for intimidation. This is what Odan-Urr meant. Do not use a lightsaber to create fear in an opponent. Use it to end the fight as quickly and mercifully as possible. If this means destroying the opponent, so be it. But if a Jedi can end a

fight without killing an opponent, so much the better. The best Jedi can avert injury altogether, with only a word.

In the past, some Jedi have taken this to mean that they should carry a second, less deadly weapon. There is no such thing. If a weapon cannot kill, it is not truly a weapon. While a blaster can let a Jedi attack at a distance, it is just as effective—and more in keeping with the Jedi Code—to use the Force instead. This is why all the greatest Jedi carry only a single lightsaber as their weapon, a tool uniquely attuned for use with the Force. **E**

Duel of the Fates

Indicates game information

BY ANDY COLLINS

THE MOST DRAMATIC AND EXCITING scene of The Phantom Menace is undoubtedly the lightsaber duel between the Jedi, Qui-Gon Jinn and Obi-Wan Kenobi, and the Sith Lord, Darth Maul. What follows is a break down of the final portion of that battle—the combat between Kenobi and Maul

after Qui-Gon has fallen—into a round-by-round description of how it might have gone, had it been played using the Star Wars Roleplaying Game rules.

♦ The final battle begins with both Jedi having lost a significant number of vitality points through combat and use of Force powers. Neither is at full strength.

Remember that normal hits in combat (that is, hits that apply damage to the target's vitality points) don't actually physically strike the opponent in most cases. In the example of lightsaber combat, such strikes are deflected away or dodged at the last moment, each time making the target a bit more tired.

rules that both sides have stayed alert and battle-ready and thus keeps the initiative as previously rolled.)

Obi-Wan moves and attacks with his lightsaber, but misses.

Darth Maul takes a 2-meter adjustment backward and activates his Battlemind skill. This costs 8 vitality points and grants him a +6 Force bonus to his attacks for the next 5 rounds.

Round 2: Continuing his assault, Obi-Wan slashes twice more at Maul. Then, having taken the measure of his opponent, Maul resumes his offensive, subjecting the young Jedi to a blistering barrage of strikes.

♦ Obi-Wan takes the full attack action. Both attacks miss.

Darth Maul takes the full attack action, though he chooses to fight defensively. This grants him a +3 dodge bonus to his Defense while applying a -4 penalty to his attacks. The first attack hits and inflicts 12 points of damage, but since Obi-Wan still has vitality points, this attack doesn't actually hit him, but costs him vitality as he barely manages to block it.

Round 1: As the energy barriers of the power station open, Darth Maul waits to see Obi-Wan's reaction to his Master's death. In a rage, Obi-Wan charges at Maul, bringing his lightsaber down in a powerful two-handed strike that Maul deflects while backing away.

♦ Darth Maul, having the higher initiative score as determined at the beginning of the battle, holds his action. (The Gamemaster could have ruled that the delay in the battle caused by the closing energy barriers forced a new initiative roll, but he instead

Round 3: Obi-Wan attacks the Sith Lord again, but his twin blows are blocked easily by his agile foe. Maul retaliates with another flurry of attacks that Kenobi only barely avoids.

♦ Obi-Wan takes the full attack action. Both attacks miss.

Darth Maul takes the full attack action. One attack hits and inflicts 13 points of damage. Again, this attack doesn't actually physically connect, but costs Obi-Wan vitality as he barely manages to block it.



Trapped between energy barriers, Obi-Wan watches Qui-Gon fall to Darth Maul.



▲ Darth Maul advances for the day's second kill.

Round 4: Obi-Wan backs up and assumes a defensive pose, realizing that Darth Maul's expertise is even greater than he feared. Perhaps sensing weakness in his opponent, Maul advances, continuing his assault.

♦ Obi-Wan elects to use the Total Defense option and gives up his attacks for the round to gain a +6 dodge bonus to his Defense for one round. This raises his Defense to 28.

Darth Maul takes the full attack action. Thanks to Obi-Wan's decision to use Total Defense, all five attacks miss.

Round 5: Kenobi resumes his attack, though his pair of strikes glance harmlessly off Maul's saber. For his part, the Sith Lord never hesitates, slashing at Kenobi again and again.

♦ Obi-Wan takes the full attack action, though he chooses to fight defensively. This grants him a +3 dodge bonus to Defense at the cost of a -4 penalty to hit. Both attacks miss.

Darth Maul takes the full attack action. All five attacks miss.

Round 6: Realizing that he can't hope to win as long as Maul wields his twinbladed lightsaber, Obi-Wan instead slashes through the center of the Sith Lord's weapon hilt and then kicks him in the chest, knocking him down.

♦ Obi-Wan spends a Force point. Rolling 2d6, he determines that he will have a +8 Force bonus to all his actions for one round. He elects to take the full attack action. He attacks Maul once, attacks Maul's light-saber once, and also kicks Maul. Since he is attacking with two weapons this round, he suffers a -4 penalty to his lightsaber attacks and a -8 penalty to his unarmed (kick) attack. He further chooses to make the kick a Knockdown attack.

The lightsaber attack against Maul hits, inflicting 11 points of damage, and the attack against Maul's lightsaber also hits, inflicting 12 points of damage. This is enough to break the lightsaber, which (in this case) effectively turns it into a normal, single-bladed weapon.

Obi-Wan Kenobi vs Darth Maul



Obi-Wan Kenobi Jedi Guardian 6

Strength	15 (+2)	Intelligence	13 (+1)
Dexterity	16 (+3)	Wisdom	12 (+1)
Constitution	14 (+2)	Charisma	13 (+1)

Defense: 20 (22 in melee when wielding lightsaber)

Vitality Points: 52 (currently 38)

Wound Points: 14

Force Points: 3

Attacks: Lightsaber +9/+4 (crit 19+)
or Unarmed +8/+3 (crit 20)

Damage: Lightsaber 3d6
or Unarmed 1d3+2

Darth Maul Jedi Guardian 12

Strength	17 (+3)	Intelligence	14 (+2)
Dexterity	19 (+4)	Wisdom	11 (+0)
Constitution	16 (+3)	Charisma	12 (+1)

Defense: 24 (26 in melee when wielding lightsaber)

Vitality Points: 120 (currently 63)

Wound Points: 16

Force Points: 0

Attacks: Double-bladed lightsaber +13/+9/+8/+4/+3 (crit 19+)
or Lightsaber +11/+6/+1 (crit 19+)
or Unarmed +15/+10/+5 (crit 20)

Damage: Lightsaber 4d6
or Unarmed 1d6+3

For complete game statistics, pick up the Star Wars Roleplaying Game.



▲ Barely blocking the flurry of strikes, Obi-Wan does not give in to fear in the face of a superior opponent.



Obi-Wan shifts to defense, but stays ready. ▲

Finally, the kick hits, but instead of inflicting damage it forces Maul to make an opposed Strength check versus Obi-Wan. Maul loses and is knocked down; he also fails a Fortitude save (forced by the Knockdown attack) and is stunned.

Maul cannot act this round. Furthermore, he now must use his lightsaber attack bonuses (instead of his double-bladed lightsaber attack bonuses), which are worse.

Round 7: Obi-Wan then leaps over his fallen foe, who barely blocks an attack from the vaulting Jedi. As Obi-Wan lands behind him, Maul jumps to his feet and runs back toward the open doorway.

◆ Obi-Wan uses his Tumble skill to move through the square occupied by Darth Maul (actually, he goes over his opponent, but the effect is the same). He attacks the stunned Maul and hits, inflicting a mere 7 points of damage. Maul still has vitality points left, so this “hit” doesn’t actually make contact, but it weakens him nonetheless.

Darth Maul leaps to his feet and moves away from Kenobi.

Round 8: Pressing his advantage, Obi-Wan follows the fleeing Darth Maul, slashing his lightsaber at his foe. But Maul is far from finished and regains his composure, following a trio of lightsaber strikes with a

kick to Obi-Wan’s face.

◆ Obi-Wan moves adjacent to Maul and attacks once with his lightsaber, missing.

Darth Maul takes a full attack action, including a kick. Since he has Two-Weapon Fighting, he suffers a –2 penalty to his lightsaber attacks and a –6 penalty to his kick. The lightsaber attacks miss, but the kick connects, inflicting 5 points of damage.

Round 9: Momentarily shaken by Maul’s kick, Kenobi assumes a defensive posture, but the Sith Lord simply spins and tumbles past the Jedi.

◆ Obi-Wan takes a 2-meter adjustment back and readies an attack to use if Maul moves to a space where Obi-Wan threatens him.

Darth Maul uses his Tumble skill to move past Obi-Wan.

Obi-Wan attacks Maul with his readied action, but misses. Since he readied the action, he stays ahead of Maul in initiative order.

Round 10: Obi-Wan resumes his all-out offensive, subjecting Maul to a flurry of attacks that the Sith Lord blocks away effortlessly.

◆ Obi-Wan takes the full attack action. Both attacks miss.

Maul selects the Total Defense option, granting him a +6 dodge bonus to Defense for one round.

Round 11: Obi-Wan continues to press the attack, but Maul dodges his attacks.

❖ Obi-Wan takes the full attack action, but misses both times.

Maul selects the Total Defense option.

Round 12: After parrying another pair of assaults by the young Padawan, Maul uses the Force to push Obi-Wan back toward the open shaft. Obi-Wan, surprised by the attack, falls into the shaft. He saves himself from certain death by grabbing onto a handhold projecting from the side of the shaft.

❖ Obi-Wan takes the full attack action, but again misses twice.

Maul uses Force Push against Obi-Wan (which costs 4 vitality points). Obi-Wan fails his saving throw, suffers 6 points of damage, and is knocked back 4 meters and into the shaft. The Gamemaster allows Obi-Wan to attempt a Dexterity check to grab onto the protruding handhold, which is successful.

Non-Combat: While the Jedi dangles helplessly below, Darth Maul strides up to the mouth of the shaft, pausing only to kick Obi-Wan's lightsaber into the pit.

❖ At this point, the Gamemaster chooses to drop out of round-by-round action, since Maul isn't continuing the attack. This is a judgment call—he could just as easily ruled that the combat was still going.

As Maul taunts him from above, Obi-Wan remembers that Qui-Gon's lightsaber still lies next to his fallen body. Maul notices that Obi-Wan's attention seems diverted, but fails to realize the significance of this.

❖ Darth Maul has a chance to avoid being surprised by Obi-Wan's action. In this case, the Gamemaster determines that Sense Motive is the appropriate skill to use (trying to determine what Obi-Wan is about to do). Maul doesn't have any ranks in Sense Motive, so he just makes an untrained check using his Wisdom, and fails.

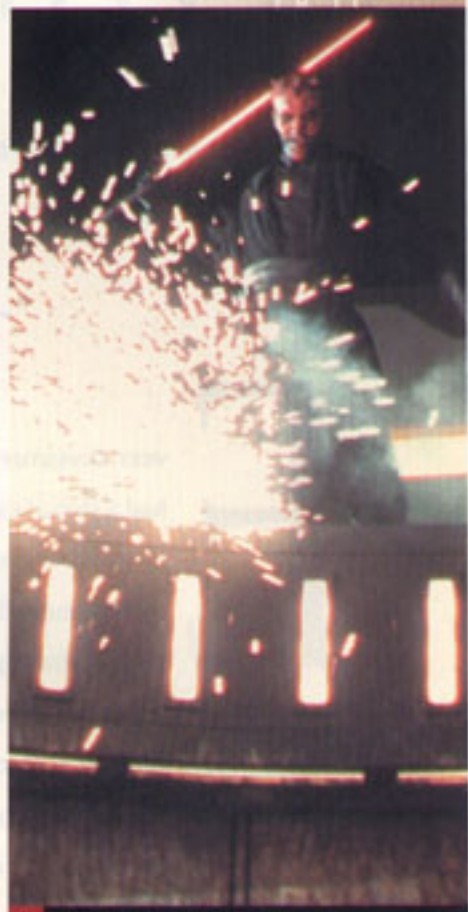
Surprise: Obi-Wan uses the Force to draw Qui-Gon's lightsaber to his hand.

❖ Obi-Wan takes his action during the surprise round to use Move Object to draw the light-saber to his hand. This costs him a single vitality point, leaving him with only one left.

Final: As the lightsaber leaps into his hand, Obi-Wan vaults out of the pit and over Darth Maul's head. Landing behind the surprised Sith Lord, Obi-Wan delivers a deadly slash with his lightsaber, severing Darth Maul in two and sending the body down the shaft.

❖ Obi-Wan and Darth Maul roll initiative as combat begins again. Obi-Wan wins, which means that Darth Maul will be flat-footed (and won't gain any bonus to Defense from his Dexterity) until he acts.

Obi-Wan spends a Force point (gaining a +6 bonus to all actions for one round). He jumps out of the pit and over Darth Maul, using his Tumble skill to move through (over) Maul's space. He then attacks the flat-footed Maul, scoring a critical hit and rolling maximum damage (18 points). This is enough to reduce Maul to zero wound points. Adding a bit of flavor, the GM rules that this attack severs Maul at the waist and sends the body tumbling down the shaft. ☐



▲ Maul smiles at his handiwork.



▲ Though he's seriously in trouble, Obi-Wan summons the Force in preparation for one last desperate maneuver.

SHIPBUILDING SECRETS

BY THOMAS M. REID

The *Mystic Burn*: Your Transport To Adventure

EVERY ADVENTURESOME BEING smitten with a good dose of wanderlust had a ship of some kind. Every shrewd diplomat on a sensitive political mission, every conniving scoundrel trying to make a few extra credits smuggling illicit cargo, every curious explorer interested in seeing what lay in the next star system over had some means of getting from place to place. Whether it was a sleek Nubian luxury yacht pretentious enough for a Republic senator, or a rattletrap light freighter held together with mismatched parts and a prayer, ships of all types, sizes, and affiliations plied the space lanes, visiting every major system and all the backwater rim worlds, to boot.

**"You've never heard of the
Millennium Falcon?!"**

"Should I have?"

**"It's the ship that made the
Kessel Run in less than
twelve parsecs!"**

—HAN SOLO AND OBI-WAN KENOBI

In a roleplaying campaign set the *Star Wars* universe, the heroes are, sooner or later, going to need a ship of their own. It's simple enough for the GM to gloss over this issue, merely stating that the characters "have a ship" that gets them from place to place. However, this solution misses an opportunity to add a level of depth and personality to the campaign. With very little effort, you can develop a starship with a bit of flavor, history, and character that adds much to the quality of the game. Who doesn't think fondly of the *Millennium Falcon*, with all of its quirks and flaws, as an integral part of the exploits of Han and Chewie?

In keeping with this concept, let's make up a unique ship for a group of characters. You could easily say that the characters have a ship and leave it at that, but it is far more fun to develop one with some personality all its own. You don't need to do a lot, just add a few interesting details to go with an evocative name, and come up with an explanation for why it's available to the characters. Let's go through this process, step by step, asking the following questions:

1: HOW DO THE HEROES GET THE SHIP?

2: WHAT KIND OF SHIP IS IT?

3: WHAT IS THE SHIP'S HISTORY?

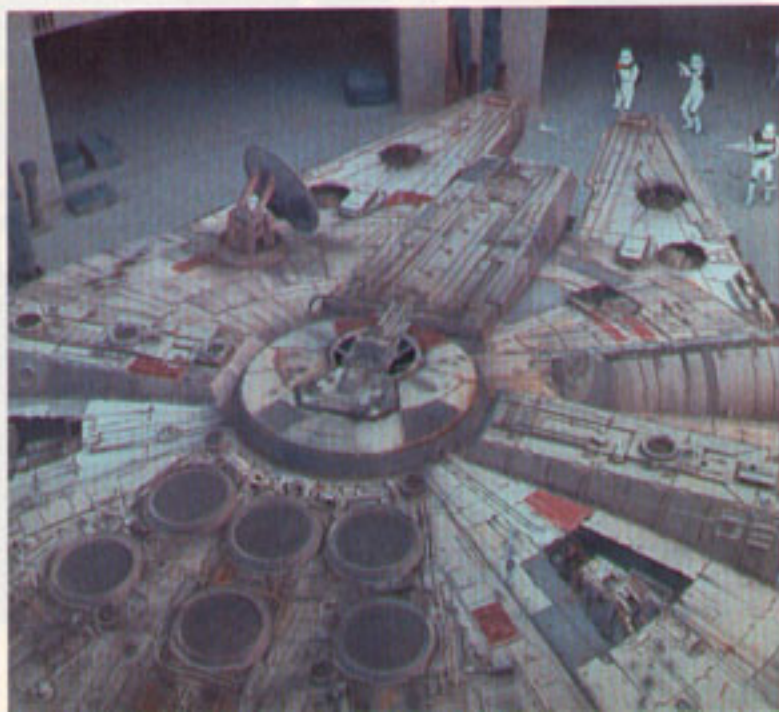
4: WHAT QUIRKS AND FLAWS DOES THE SHIP HAVE?

5: WHAT'S THE SHIP'S NAME?

1: How do the heroes get the ship?

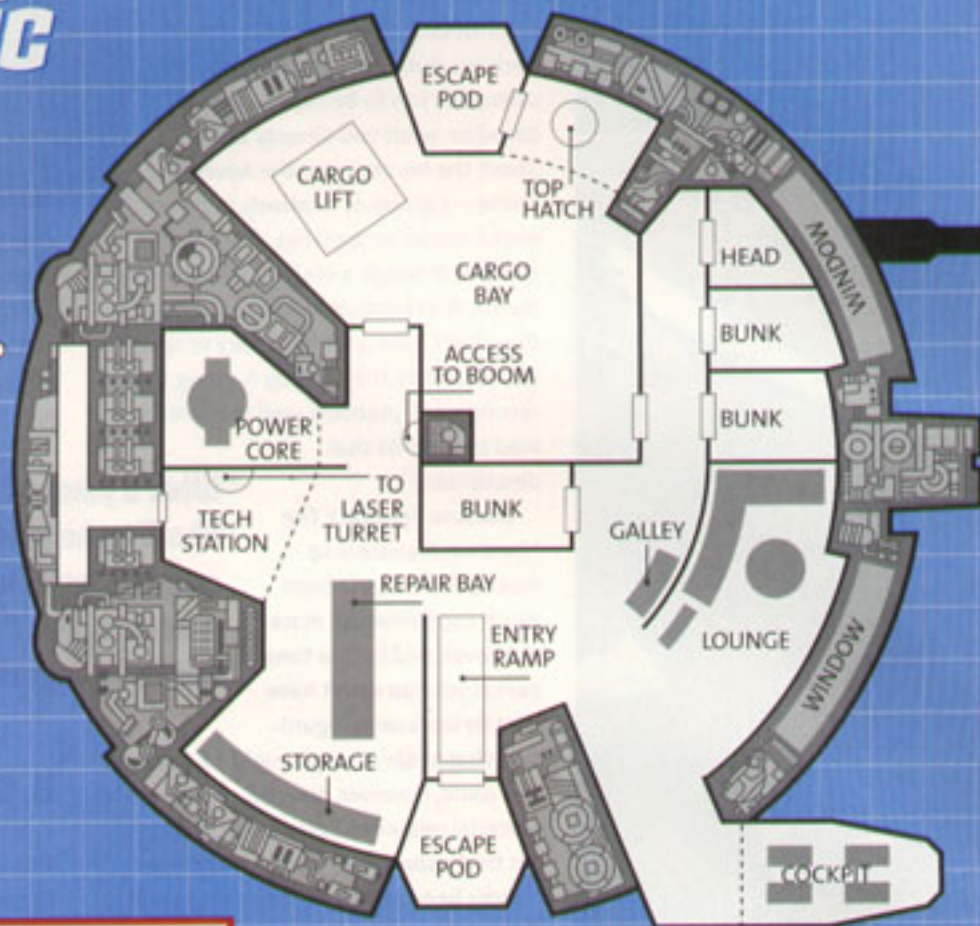
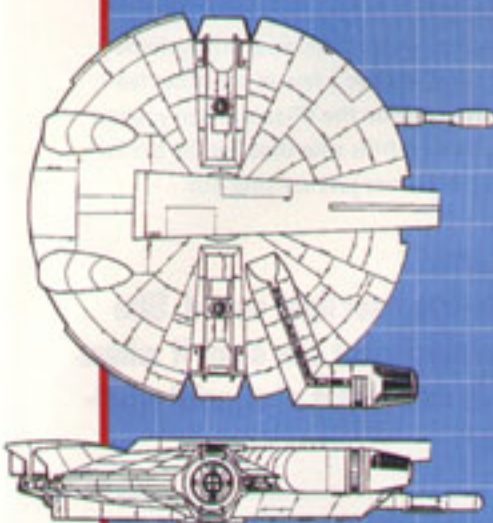
This question depends a lot on the characters themselves. You will most likely decide the issue during, or as a result of, game play. Some major options for permanently acquiring a ship are: purchasing it, stealing it, or receiving it as a gift for a job well done. Another good way to get a ship is to have one on "permanent loan." A patron could lend them the ship, or in a strictly military campaign, they might have one as standard issue.

Whatever the means, figuring out how the heroes acquire the vessel is half the fun. If you're trying to set up back-story for





Mystic Burn



STAR WARS RPG COMBAT STATISTICS

MYSTIC BURN	Small Light Freighter-class starship
▶ Length	35 meters
▶ Passengers and crew	8
▶ Cargo Capacity	75 metric tons
▶ Defense	21 (size +1, armor +10)
▶ Shield Points	30
▶ Hull Points	120
▶ DR	10
▶ Weapons	1 laser cannon (turret mounted)
▶ Damage	4d10 × 2
▶ Maximum Range	Short

nonplayer characters, go ahead and make it all up. If this is for the player's heroes though, work it out as part of an adventure; let the players make the decisions for their characters. However you resolve this question, it's definitely the place to start, because the ship's origins help answer the rest of the questions here.

As an example, suppose that the eight heroes from the *Star Wars Adventure Game* need a ship to call their own. The *Adventure Game* is set on the planet Naboo during the time of the Trade Federation blockade and subsequent invasion, and none of the adventures involve space travel. If the characters plan to continue their daring feats once the invasion has been repulsed and

peace has been restored, they need a way to see the wider galaxy beyond Naboo.

Suppose that one of the characters, Deel Suroon—a young Twi'lek scoundrel whose parents are wealthy merchants running a trading emporium in the Naboo capital of Theed—earns a generous monthly allowance from his parents. Deel, being the scoundrel that he is, really likes to gamble, and has gotten lucky recently at the game houses in Theed. By combining Deel's credits with those of his companions, the group has managed to scrape together enough to buy their first ship.

2: What kind of ship is it?

Now that you know how the characters acquired the ship, you need to know what kind of ship it's going to be. A lot of factors contribute to this decision, but again, the primary consideration has to be the characters. Based on what you already know about the heroes from the *Adventure Game*—a group of relatively inexperienced heroes on a planet that has just suffered through a major military engagement—it's reasonable to assume that they don't have a lot of money to spend, and whatever they do buy is going to be secondhand, probably well used. What kind of ship fits that description?

Because Episode I: *The Phantom Menace* is so recent, there hasn't been much supplemental material developed for the time period yet. You won't have a lot to work with regarding what kinds of ships might be available. You could, however, draw on supplemental material related to Episodes IV, V, and VI, set thirty-some-odd years in the future. There's been plenty written about ships from that time period.

With a small amount of research into older *Star Wars* roleplaying game product, you will find that ships like the *Millennium Falcon*—a Corellian YT-1300 that's been heavily modified over the years—have been in service for a long time. That sounds promising. Digging a little deeper, you can discover that the Corellian shipyards have built a number of YT-class

"You came in that thing? You're braver than I thought!"

—PRINCESS LEIA ORGANA

ships, including the YT-1210 and the YT-2400. From the information available, it appears that, with regards to Corellian naming conventions, the lower the number, the older the model. Great! You can go with an early model Corellian ship and be pretty sure it exists during the time of Episode I. But which one? Since the timeframes are somewhat vague, you can fudge a little bit and make up a model number—a YT-1200, for example, might be a stripped-down version of the YT-1210. In order to make it

stripped down, reduce its abilities. Make the engines slower, the weapons systems lighter, and remove a few of the other features available on the YT-1210. When you're done, it's a no-frills ship that fits the bill for a group of heroes just starting out.

"What a piece of junk!"

"She'll make point-five past light speed. She may not look like much, but she's got it where it counts, kid. I've made a lot of special modifications, myself."

—LUKE SKYWALKER AND HAN SOLO

3: What is the ship's history?

So now that you know what kind of ship you're dealing with and how the characters got it, you want to figure out at least a little bit of its history. Invent a tale of where the ship has been and the identity of at least one former owner. You might even work the story into game play, especially if you want to have the players roleplay their way through the purchase.

Continuing the example, suppose that a disabled vessel is listed for sale down at the space port. Its owner, Captain Harkan Resch, is a small-time independent merchant who has gone nearly bankrupt because of the Trade Federation's recent actions surrounding Naboo. Resch can't afford to repair the ship, and he can't get a shipping contract with enough money up front either, because the economy is temporarily weakened after the blockade and invasion. Disenchanted with his life and his business, Captain Resch decides to sell his ship, hoping to pocket enough to live comfortably for a while.

4: What quirks and flaws does the ship have?

That little bit of history in the section above only scratches the surface, but it's a good setup for roleplaying the ship-buying

NAMING YOUR SHIP

In the STAR WARS ROLEPLAYING GAME, one of the most fascinating things about ship creation is giving the vessel a name.

Coming up with a good name doesn't have to be hard, but it does take a few moments' thought. Nothing beats developing a name yourself, but if you're pressed for time or just don't have any good ideas, these tables can help you out.

Keep in mind that the choices in the tables that follow are far from complete. A thesaurus can be an invaluable aid in coming up with other, similar words, and you might even think of other categories that could fit within this naming model. These tables are designed merely to scratch the surface of your imagination in ship-naming exercises.

MILITARY SHIPS

Military ships appear in every era of the Star Wars universe, primarily belonging to the Empire. The names for military ships work well with a single-word name. Alternatively, you could use some of the choices to name a class of ship, such as the Cheetah class of light cruiser. To use the tables for military ships, Roll once on this table, then consult the appropriate table indicated:

d4	Result
1	Table 1
2	Table 3
3	A famous military leader (last name)
4	A famous military site

In the case of a famous military leader or site, naming a ship after a general, admiral, or political leader or (in the case of sites) a battle site or system is common. For example, the Empire might have named a heavy cruiser the Tarkin during

later stages of the war against the rebellion, or the New Republic might consider naming a flagship the Endor or the Organa.

PRIVATE SHIPS

Private ships have a wide variety of name types, either one- or two-word names being most common. In the case of two-word names, the first is usually a descriptive of some kind. To use the tables to name private ships, roll once on this table, then consult the appropriate table(s) indicated:

d8	Result
1	Table 5
2	A person's first name (alternatively, possessive + Table 6)
3	Table 1 + Table 3
4	Table 1 + Table 4
5	Table 1 + Table 5
6	Table 2 + Table 3
7	Table 2 + Table 4
8	Table 2 + Table 5

In the case of using a person's name, you actually have two choices; you can either name the craft after the person (for example, Luke in his later days might have named a private craft the Beru in honor of his aunt), or you could make the name possessive and add something to the end (such as Beru's Kiss, for example).

Suppose you want to name a smuggler's ship. The best way to

TABLE 1:

ADJECTIVES

d20	Result
1	Abundant
2	Agile
3	Dominant
4	Dusky
5	Eager
6	Enchanted
7	Ethereal
8	Fair
9	Jubilant
10	Majestic
11	Mythic
12	Nimble
13	Noble
14	Regal
15	Royal
16	Spirited
17	Spry
18	Undaunted
19	Wild
20	Wondrous

TABLE 2:
COLORS

d20	Result
1	Azure
2	Brass
3	Bronze
4	Cerulean
5	Copper
6	Coral
7	Crimson
8	Diamond
9	Emerald
10	Gold
11	Golden
12	Ivory
13	Pearl
14	Ruby
15	Ruby
16	Sable
17	Sapphire
18	Scarlet
19	Silver
20	Violet

TABLE 3:

ANIMALS

d4	Result
1-2	Table 3a
3	Table 3b
4	Table 3c

TABLE 3A:
REGULAR
ANIMALS

d20	Result
1	Barracuda
2	Chameleon
3	Cheetah
4	Eagle
5	Falcon
6	Fox
7	Hawk
8	Heron
9	Hornet
10	Jaguar
11	Leopard
12	Lynx
13	Ram
14	Scorpion
15	Shark
16	Spider
17	Stag
18	Tiger
19	Viper
20	Wolf

TABLE 3B:
STAR WARS
SPECIES

d4	Result
1	Clawfish
2	Rancor
3	Taun-Taun
4	Wampa

TABLE 3C:
MYTHICAL
CREATURES

d10	Result
1	Angel
2	Demon
3	Devil
4	Dragon
5	Phoenix
6	Shadow
7	Spectre
8	Sphinx
9	Unicorn
10	Wraith

TABLE 4:

FORCES OF NATURE

d12	Result
1	Abyss
2	Aura
3	Blaze
4	Gale
5	Lightning
6	Maelstrom
7	Nova
8	Squall
9	Storm
10	Tempest
11	Whirlwind
12	Zephyr

TABLE 5:
OCCUPATIONS

d10	Result
1	Dancer
2	Hunter
3	Invader
4	Lancer
5	Monarch
6	Nomad
7	Raider
8	Rake
9	Voyager
10	Wanderer

TABLE 6:
THINGS

d8	Result
1	Aria
2	Dream
3	Gaze
4	Heart
5	Kiss
6	Love
7	Smile
8	Song

do this is to look through the lists until something strikes your fancy. But if you want to use the tables, first you roll on the Private Ships table. Getting a result of 7 indicates that you should then go to Table 2 and

Table 4. On Table 2, you roll a 4, which is "Cerulean," and on Table 4 you roll a 12, getting "Zephyr." Putting them together results in a ship named the *Cerulean Zephyr*.



process, and as the game progresses, it lends itself to further detail down the line. Once you've got those basics, create some quirks and flaws for the ship. Base them on what kinds of cargo the ship used to haul, what systems the ship has visited, or how much it's been shot up. All of these story bits add flavor and personality to the ship. Be careful to create character though, not handicaps. Don't leave your players hanging because you decided the ship suffers a nav computer malfunction every time you fire the laser cannons. Instead, make the traits memorable without drastically affecting game play.

To round out the example, we already know that the ship needs repairs before she'll fly. You could play this up by deciding that one of the required parts in the YT-1200 is rare and hard to get (maybe it's always malfunctioning—perhaps the main reason the YT-1210 was built to replace the earlier model). You could base an adventure on the quest for the needed part. In addition, suppose that Resch commonly hauled unusual alien foodstuffs. Unfortunately, he once had a mishap with some spilled containers of a Rhodian delicacy, and now his ship always has the faint odor of something akin to old shoes. Those are only a few ideas.

Remember that one or two quirks are more memorable than half a dozen. Don't create so many charming little "features" that the ship isn't worth the trouble to your players.

5: What's the ship's name?

This is the final piece of the puzzle. You can give the ship any name you'd like, but sometimes it's helpful to come up with a name that reflects some aspect of the vessel or of the person who originally named her. The players might decide to give their heroes' ship an entirely new name, which is great; but to round out the process, invent an existing name to start with.

Captain Resch always thought that the glow of his ship's engines, or the burn, as he liked to call them, had some unusual

"What are you doing here?"

"Aw, repairs. I thought you could help me out."

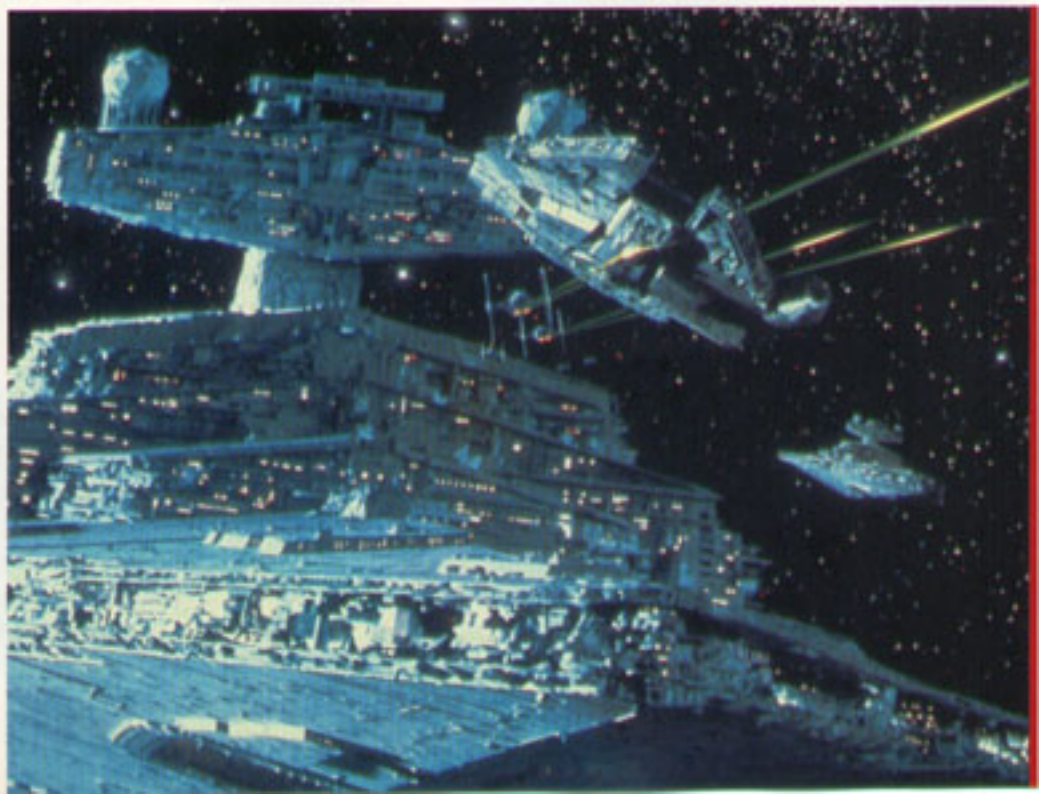
"What have you done to my ship?"

"Your ship? Hey, remember, you lost her to me, fair and square."

—LANDO CALRISSIAN AND HAN SOLO

fluctuations in coloring. In fact, he could never figure out why they did that, but he liked them. He found them mysterious, almost mystical. So that's what he named the ship: *The Mystic Burn*.

And there you have it. Following the steps outlined above, we created a suitable ship with personality and flavor for the Adventure Game heroes to call their own. The *Mystic Burn* is an unremarkable and somewhat shabby looking vessel to the millions of spacefaring travelers with whom she has crossed paths, but she's the pride and joy of the eight characters who now own her. **E**





THE UNIVERSITY OF SAMBRA GUIDE TO INTELLIGENT LIFE

THE MARVEL SERIES

BY RICH HANDLEY & JOE BONGIORNO
ILLUSTRATED BY JOE CORRONEY
THANKS TO PABLO HIDALGO

The University of Sambra Guide to Intelligent Life caused quite a stir among the Imperials. Before fleeing the university to avoid imprisonment for releasing data deemed "inappropriate," Tem Eliss made *The Guide* available on public channels. He has since continued to offer updates from his hidden place of exile.

Among the book's thousands of entries, the *lyra* sentimentologist included accounts of several alien species first discovered during the time that the Alliance still battled the Empire for freedom.

The Empire covered up many events of this era. However, thanks to Professor Eliss, we can now revisit this era by exploring some of the species discovered and forgotten by the march of the Empire.



EM'LIY

(A.K.A. NOMADS)

On Shalyvane, the dominant species, the Em'liy, were driven out of their cities, including the capital city of Chinshassa, by Imperial forces led by double agent Shira Brie. A disgraced people with no home and no resources to rebuild cities, they felt undeserving of a name and simply called themselves "Nomads."

APPEARANCE AND BIOLOGY

Generally humanoid, the Em'liy have muscular bodies and yellow-tan skin, evolutionary adaptations to the strong rays of their sun, Kavaan'oa. The Em'liy live a nomadic existence, constantly exposed to the sun. This has led to an increasing number of tumor-related deaths in recent years.

Em'liy wear their fine dark hair in long topknots to show caste status and inspire fear in enemies. The number of top-

knots varies from zero to three, depending on caste. Otherwise, their bodies are completely hairless.

Em'liy are most distinguishable from other humanoid species by their distinct lack of facial features. Their smooth, noseless and earless faces show little in the way of sensory apparati. They have small, round eyes with no lids or lashes, and their thin mouth openings are nearly lipless. All auditory and olfactory apparati are internal, covered by a thin, gas-permeable layer of skin. It is believed that this is an evolutionary development to protect sensitive organs from the hot sun, harsh wind, and sudden sandstorms.

Because the Em'liy require little sleep, they normally stay awake for the length of two local days. From their perspective, the sun rises and sets twice in the course of a day. Arguing the point with them would be futile and quite likely fatal, as the sun is an important part of their religion.

TEMPERAMENT

The Em'liy are deadly warriors, with a ferocity in battle unmatched by many warrior species. Observers have labeled this ferocity "berserker" behavior, though this is not entirely accurate. Warring Em'liy give themselves over completely to a fight, letting the course of battle define their actions and thoughts. They control their own actions, but the Spirit of Battle helps refine that control. It is a fine distinction, one often lost to off-worlders, but the Em'liy understand the difference. Jedi historians visiting Shalyvane once postulated that this ability was an unexplored extension of the Force, but this was shortly before the Jedi were exterminated, so the theory has never been tested.

The Em'liy's natural ferocity usually manifests only during battle or external threat. At other times, the Em'liy possess considerable self-restraint. They have no compunctions about killing when necessary, but they do not



approve of needless bloodshed and seek other outcomes when feasible. This is a central part of their religion. Any Em'liy violating this code would be severely reprimanded by his peers.

HISTORY AND CULTURE

The Em'liy are deeply religious and superstitious, with a pantheon of gods so numerous few outsiders could name them all. The most well-known include Dra'jhok, the Sender of Battle; his brother Dra'vil, the Spirit of Battle; Felid Slin, the Matriarch Spirit of the Sand; Courtra'paeas, the Mischievous One; and Eeh'cra Niw'dug, He Who Has Passed Beyond.

At the heart of Em'liy religion is Kavaan, the Provider of the Sun, who allows Kavaan'oa to rise and set twice each day. To honor Kavaan, Em'liy pray and make blood sacrifices at a large stone altar

erected at the center of the holiest of their holy places, the Circle of Kavaan. Above all else, they vow to guard the Circle and never allow it to be defiled.

A year after the Battle of Yavin, Shalyvane was decimated in what the Imperials deemed a "disciplinary cleansing," claiming the Em'liy had forsaken their gods and were being punished for their blasphemy. The Imperial propaganda machine covered up the attack by reporting that the Em'liy themselves had destroyed Chinshassa, which was said to have been a city inhabited by human colonists. No off-worlders knew the truth, so no one questioned the official explanation.

The Em'liy were so ashamed at having let outsiders defile their holy city and the Circle of Kavaan that they let the Imperial claims remain uncontested. With such shame obscuring their path to the Circle, they could not honor Kavaan and believed themselves unworthy of living in Chinshassa. Thus, the city remained in ruins for

many years. In their eyes, though the Imperials lied about the city's destruction, there was no question that their gods had, in fact, punished them and that they deserved it.

The Em'liy cast aside their identity and lived in nameless, nomadic penance. They believed that when Kavaan forgave them for letting the Circle fall, she would make her forgiveness known by having an out-worlder acknowledge the truth. Since out-worlders brought this shame upon them, only out-worlders could lift that shame. Then and only then would the Em'liy reclaim their name and their cities.

POLITICS

The Em'liy live by the examples set by others in their clan, especially elders. Old age is revered in Em'liy society. Any decision made by an elder sound of mind is followed without question unless countermanded by the eldest in the caste.

Em'liy society consists of four castes: the Argwin, Damilini, Criclamon, and Dojufi, all named for gods in the pantheon. All castes hold

equal societal status with the elder member of each holding sovereign power within that group. To signify caste status, zero to three topknots are worn, respectively.

Castes commonly work together. However, since the fall of Chinshassa, the Damilini have been slightly ostracized by the others, since they were guarding the Circle of Kavaan when the Imperials attacked.

TECHNOLOGY LEVEL

Before their fall, the Em'liy possessed a good deal of technology, allowing them to fill their cities with beautiful spires and buildings. However, since taking on a nomadic existence, they have turned their backs on most technology, believing themselves undeserving of conveniences. The one exception they allow is in the area of weaponry, as they use both spears and the blasters left behind by their ancestors.

EM'LIY IN THE GALAXY

Even before their fall, Em'liy rarely ventured beyond Shalyvane. Xenophobia and a lack of strong space-faring instincts kept them planet bound and isolated for millennia until the Empire changed their existence. Since that time, only one Em'liy, Pilba Dalohog, has journeyed off-world, though the prejudice and loneliness he faced nearly made him return immediately. Once the truth about the Em'liy is known, it is hoped that others may follow his lead.

PERSONALITY NOTES

Angered Em'liy are dangerous foes and worthy allies. They are not easily impressed; those who impress them have allies for life. Entire wars have ended because one Em'liy general sufficiently impressed another in the course of battle. Since their fall from grace, however, much of their arrogance has left them, replaced with feelings of loss and restlessness.

NOTABLE PERSONALITIES

- » G'hinji Dros, Eldest of the Argwin
- » Mar'holt Kisfrel, the last General of Chinshassa before the city fell, now remembered as a traitor and a failure.



EM'LIY



ISKALONIAN

(A.K.A. THE SCHOOL)

Iskalonians have a marine culture made of representatives from several worlds who fled to Iskalon to escape persecution. Refugees found it there as well, in the form of Imperial domination. The game stats here concern only the Inleshat, who comprise the majority of Iskalonian society known as "the School."

APPEARANCE AND BIOLOGY

Describing the "average" Iskalonian is not easy, for the School is comprised of six major aquatic species and stragglers from eleven others. Several major species are given here.

The dominant species of Iskalon are the Inleshat, originally from Drexel II. With skin ranging from tan to green, they have long, silky hair, three webbed

for their poor eyesight.

The Chuhkyvi, the most humanoid species of the School, appear similar to the Inleshat, but with tan skin, yellow eyes, four-fingered hands, and a more pronounced nose. They are short, with thickly muscled bodies and a keen sense of smell.

The least humanoid of the major species are the fishlike Frid of the planet Mackar, who have green skin, violet bulbous eyes, skin flaps on both sides of their mouths, and long, scaly tails. Males have a fin atop their heads; females do not. They are a speechless, communicating via telepathy.

The Graygl have round, fleshy heads. Wide mouths filled with sharp, pointed teeth give them a permanent look of anger despite their gentle nature. Their flaring nostrils and red eyes add to this illusion, allowing them to intimidate dangerous predators such as the chiaki. No one knows which world the Graygl hail from, though some scientists postulate that they might have come from Danalbeth.

Rarest among the Iskalonians are the Stribers, from Julsujod III. Smooth and finless, with crystal blue skin, large eyes, and thin bodies, they too are telepathic. Unlike the Frid, they are also capable of speech. The Stribers

are a dying species, very few in number; biologists estimate that at their current death rate, they will be extinct within the next few generations.

Finally, from the planet Eriscot, are the Nejma, or "Honored Ones." Though allied with the School, they keep to themselves, and little is known about them. Brown-skinned, with a wild shock of orange hair and huge red eyes, they are the tallest of the Iskalonian species, some approaching two meters in height. A long dorsal fin runs the length of their backs.

TEMPERAMENT

Most Iskalonians are peaceful and friendly. As a collection of refugees, they vowed long ago to live a life of harmony with others and with nature. That said, most Iskalonians are skilled with stingers (ranged weapons similar to blasters) in defense against predators.

Violence is rare among members of the School, though not unheard of. However, following the destruction of Pavillion, fear of off-worlders sparked riots on several occasions when Alliance representatives visited Iskalon. The School is ashamed of this lapse, feeling that the violence of even a few diminishes the whole as if the whole had done the deed.

As beings bred in the open ocean, Iskalonians have little need for privacy. Love and passion are never hidden, and the concept of spying is a foreign idea.

HISTORY AND CULTURE

The School's origins are lost. It is known that millennia ago, cataclysms on several water worlds left inhabitants helpless. Spacefaring benefactors arrived and helped those inhabitants relocate to Iskalon. Dr. Hoole, a noted Shi'ido anthro-

THE ISKALONIANS VOWED LONG AGO TO LIVE A LIFE OF HARMONY WITH OTHERS AND WITH NATURE

fingers on each hand, and wide, pupilless eyes. The Inleshat have long, pointed ears that can hear underwater activity from kilometers away, a compensation

Game Statistics (A Word of Caution)

For more than 100 issues, Marvel comics produced a *Star Wars* comic book series that introduced numerous stories, technologies, and species set in the Classic era of the *Star Wars* universe. Though these stories are not considered canon, the ideas created for them work well in a roleplaying environment. However, the species presented here are not necessarily balanced for game play. Gamemasters have the final word on whether these species are suitable as player characters in their campaigns.

Species Adjustments

SPECIES	ADJUSTMENT
Em'liy	+2 Constitution, -2 Charisma
Iskalonian	+2 Intelligence, -2 Wisdom
Stenax	+2 Strength, +2 Constitution, -4 Charisma, -2 Intelligence, -2 Wisdom
S'kytri	+2 Strength, +2 Constitution, +2 Wisdom
Nagai	+2 Dexterity, -2 Strength
Zeltron	+4 Charisma, -2 Wisdom

Em'liy (a.k.a. "Nomads")

Maligned and homeless for years, the Nomads (or Em'liy) are a stalwart and tenacious people. They have recently begun to rebuild their capital city and explore the galaxy.

Personality: Inquisitive, coarse, and occasionally mischievous, Em'liy are fierce, loyal, and childlike.

Physical Description: Humanoid, lean, and tall, with no visible nose, ears, or eyebrows. Tan to yellowish brown skin.

Em'liy Homeworld: Shalyvane

Languages: Em'liy, Basic (sans pronouns)

Example Names: G'hinji, Pilba, Mar'holt



ISKALONIAN

pologist, is studying the ruins of their homeworlds in an effort to discover the nature of the cataclysms and the identity of the space-faring benefactors.

Until recent years, Iskalon had no formal ruler. In a loose government, the School was guided by a truism: "Someone must ever be the first to swim." One individual would lead as The First To

Swim, and the others would simply follow. Primor, an Inle-shat leader, was The First To Swim until his death. He attrib-

uted others' willingness to follow him to the fact that he would never try to take his followers against the drift of their own inclinations.

Once a friendly people, openly accommodating to visiting air breathers, the School built city-sized air tank/landing ports in several places on the planet, with transceivers set into the walls every few meters to allow communication across the barriers. At times, some of the School donned water tanks to join the off-worlders. Pavillion, the largest of these structures, was about the size of a town, and a popular tourist attraction before its destruction.

In the years following the Battle of Yavin, Rebel spies Tay Vanis and Yom Argo (a.k.a. "Tiree" and "Dart") began spreading rebellious sentiments on the worlds in this system. In retribution, the Empire decimated their homeworld of Telfrey. Admiral Griggor Tower then subjugated Iskalon under the oppressive watch of thousands of specially outfitted seatroopers.

The School sent ambassadors to Tower's immense fortress, stressing their desire for peace. Tower shattered their water tanks and left them to die. Desperate, the School sought Rebel aid, but Tower further retali-

ated by launching missiles at Iskalon's oceans, destroying Pavillion and the other city structures. Rebel agents helped repel the Imperial presence on Iskalon, but thousands died in the process, including Primor. His son, Mone, replaced him as The First To Swim, vowing to lead his people to the depths, away from air breathers. Bidding farewell to his Rebel saviors, he asked them not to return stating, "There shall be no more Pavillions, no more tanks, no more living in two worlds, not so long as there is an Empire." With those words, the survivors of the School turned their backs on the galaxy.

Sadly, among those killed in the destruction was a village of Quarren who had left their homeworld to distance themselves from the Mon Calamari. Though the School and the Quarren traded, the latter preferred to remain a separate entity from the School. One of Tower's missiles struck the ocean at the heart of their village, killing them all instantly.

POLITICS

On at least two later occasions, Rebel representatives have returned to offer assistance and alliance, first during the formation of the Alliance of Free Planets, and again when Iskalon was invaded by Nagai slavers. On both occasions, Mone politely refused further contact.

Iskalonians are concerned more with their place in the biosystems of their world than with events and problems of the outside galaxy. To them, the wars and power struggles of air breathers are meaningless and destructive. The

Adventurers: Given their history, most Em'liy adventurers are found among the fringer and scout classes, though some find their calling as soldiers. They rarely appear as nobles or Jedi.

NOMAD/ EM'LIY SPECIES TRAITS

- +2 Constitution, -2 Charisma. The Em'liy are survivors. After becoming the Nomads, they learned to survive through stealth and toughness rather than persuasion or attractiveness.
- Medium-size. As Medium-size creatures, Em'liy have no special bonuses or penalties due to size.
- Em'liy base speed is 10 meters.
- +2 species bonus on Hide, Move Silently, and Survival checks. Em'liy have honed these skills on their harsh desert world.
- Spirit of Battle: All Em'liy can choose to gain +2 Strength, +2 Dexterity, and +2 vitality points per level when in battle. This

phenomenon lasts for a number of rounds equal to 3 plus Constitution modifier and can only be used once per combat. This can be done once per day for every four levels an Em'liy has.

• Automatic Languages: Em'liy and Basic.

NOMAD COMMONER

Init +1 (+1 Dex); Defense 11 (+1 Dex); Spd 10m; VP/WP -/12; Atk +0 melee (1d3, punch or 1d6, club), +1 ranged; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +0; SZ M; FP 0; Rep 0; Str 10, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 8. Equipment: melee weapon, variety of personal belongings. Skills: Craft (any) +2, Hide +4, Move Silently +4, Survival +3. Species Features: +2 Constitution, -2 Charisma; +2 species bonus on Hide, Move Silently, and Survival checks; Spirit of Battle: provides bonuses in combat.

THE UOS GUIDE TO INTELLIGENT LIFE

Iskalonians want no part in that.

During Primor's tenure, members of the School were free to do as they chose, following The First To Swim if it felt right to do so. After Pavillion's destruction, that ideology seems to have changed, as the following exchange between Mone and Kiro, a Chuhkyvi youth, illustrates:

MONE: "We learned a bitter lesson when much of our world was decimated... we learned that unlike us, the air-breathers have no sense of their place in the biosystems. They will act in what they see as their own individual best interests, at the expense of the group, never realizing that to go against the group is to commit a very slow and inevitable suicide... for all..."

KIRO: "Mone, say you'll send a representative... I want to leave Iskalon, to see the things that the Alliance can show me, and to learn. Since we're adjusted to our new ways, helping you guide and protect our people has become a very boring business."

MONE: "I'm sorry, Kiro, but I cannot send you. It is not what the School would want. And anyone who leaves here without approval is not part of the School and cannot represent us."

TECHNOLOGY LEVEL

Despite a lack of spacefaring capability, the Iskalonians have great technological

knowledge. The very existence of Pavillion is evidence of this, as is the design of the rebreather gear they use to journey on land and allow air breathers to travel underwater. However, following Pavillion's destruction, they felt little need for most of this technology, determined as they were not to interact with those on the surface. The ruins of their great constructions have been left on the surface to deteriorate and suffer looters.

ISKALONIANS IN THE GALAXY

It is rare but not impossible to find Iskalonians off-world. Kiro, who disobeyed Mone's command and joined the Alliance of Free Planets, was the first. He was a new The First To Swim in the eyes of some, and a few followed him. Despite the New Republic's efforts to maintain peace, the School is still wary of off-worlders.

PERSONALITY NOTES

- Inleshat and Chuhkyvi are both spiritual peoples who strongly believe in defending a cause.
- Stribers react slowly when addressed, as they consider all aspects of a situation before acting.
- Frid are pacifists. They will not fight, even when attacked.
- Graygl are gentle, despite their intimidating presence. They often go out of their way to accommodate others.
- Nejma create breathtaking underwater artwork from coral reefs, attracting raiders and treasure seekers.

NOTABLE PERSONALITIES

- Primor, former Inleshat head of the School, killed in Pavillion's destruction
- Mone, his son and successor, who isolated Iskalon from all outside contact
- Kiro, a legendary Chuhkyvi hero, left to see the galaxy but returned when his people needed him
- Raquitayben, the sole survivor of the destruction of her world, was adopted by a human couple before traveling to Iskalon to live among water breathers.



A reclusive winged species from the planet Stenos, Stenaxes are violent and brutal when provoked. Though off-worlders have populated Stenos for years, surprisingly little is known about this enigmatic species, for the Stenaxes ignore them completely.

APPEARANCE AND BIOLOGY

The reptilian Stenaxes are a fearsome sight. Tall and thickly muscled, they have gargoyle-ish faces and a row of bony spikes running across their shoulders. Three sharp claws punctuate each foot, five on each hand, with additional spikes lining the backs of their calf muscles.

Stenaxes have scaly, purple-gray skin and white eyes with minuscule pupils. Their ears and brows are upswept at severe angles, due to thick muscular cords lining their facial features. Two such cords hang down far below the mouth like

Iskalonians (Chuhkyvi)

Of the 17 intelligent aquatic races that make up "the School," the Chuhkyvi are the sole race with any desire to venture out of the seas and into the galaxy.

Personality: Peaceful, friendly, selfless, and helpful, although recent events have lead them to be more cautious. Iskalonians know little of the concepts of subterfuge and deceit.

Physical Description: Humanoid with tan skin and yellow pupilless eyes. They have four fingers on each hand. Their ears are elongated and pointed, and their bodies are muscular and compact.

Iskalonian Homeworld: Iskalon

Languages: Chuhkyvi, Iskalonian, Basic.

Example Names: Kiro, Ina, Reeka.

Adventurers: Following in the lead of their folk hero, Kiro, some young Chuhkyvi Iskalonians have left their homeworld and

can be found as scouts, nobles, and Jedi. They have an intense dislike for unjust violence, lawlessness, and deceit, and thus are rarely found among the fringer or scoundrel classes.

ISKALONIAN (CHUHKYVI) SPECIES TRAITS

- +2 Intelligence, -2 Wisdom. Chuhkyvi are bright and spirited, but life under the oceans has not prepared them for the dizzyingly complex galaxy outside their calm waters.
- Medium-size. As Medium-size creatures, Chuhkyvi have no special bonuses or penalties due to size.
- Chuhkyvi base speed is 10 meters on land. Underwater base speed is 14 meters.
- +2 species bonus on Listen checks. Chuhkyvi have exceptional hearing. +8 species bonus on Swim checks.
- Chuhkyvi receive a species bonus feat for their native weapon, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (stinger).

ancient stalactites. Completely hairless, they have a wide, spine-shaped protrusion running over the head, from their eyes to the top of the neck. This protrusion houses their *kleti* gland, which allows them to home in on objects on the ground when flying at extreme heights.

Few off-worlders know the details of their biology. However, according to hieroglyphs found in the ruins of the abandoned city of Farruz, they can live as long as 270 years, remaining in good health until 220. Whether such longevity is a result of their physiology or some other influence is a source of debate, for few winged species come close to such a life span.

TEMPERAMENT

Stenaxes are surly creatures. However, getting a Stenax's attention long enough to anger it is no easy task, given their predisposition for ignoring outsiders entirely. Provided below is a transcript of an early report sent by Imperial Governor Quorl Matrin upon his arrival at Stenos:

TO: Hissa, Bertroff, Grand Moff, Kessel System
FROM: Matrin, Quorl, Governor, Stenos (4160-897-615-85711)

Greetings!

I've arrived at Stenos and taken control of this strange world. We thought the natives here would be trouble, given their physiques and the vicious battling we watched them engage in among

themselves during initial surveillance missions.

However, they've taken no notice of us, which is astounding. In fact, it's downright unsettling; surely they know we're here? Surely they must have some reaction to our using their planet? It doesn't make any sense. I've watched them on our surveillance tapes—even in their games, they're brutal. So why don't they care what we do on their world?

I'll look into this further, but I'm baffled. It's become almost an obsession of mine to get them to react. At this point, I'm even considering going into the public square and doing my impersonation of High Prophet Jedgar that you always find so amusing!

Well, Troff, I must go. I'm hearing rumors of a missing statue the Stenaxes are looking for—supposed to be pretty valuable, from what I hear—so I plan to look into that. I'll let you know what I dig up.

Yours,
Q.M.

HISTORY AND CULTURE

Shortly after the Battle of Yavin, the Rebel Alliance lost contact with a base on Stenos for five days. A team was sent to contact the local Rebel leader,

Colonel Pejanes Kindar, but when they reached his base of operations at an old temple, he was nowhere to be found. Instead, the Rebels found three people claiming to be part of Kindar's team: Rik Duel of Corellia, Chihdo of Rodia, and Dani of Zeltros. In reality, they were a



- Water breathers: Chuhkyvi, on average, cannot last for longer than one standard hour out of water and must wear special rebreather gear which allows them to breathe outside their natural habitat. The water within this unit must be replenished over time. Simple helmets last a standard day while full body gear must have its water changed once every two weeks. If the water is not changed in time, it becomes stale, then foul. Stale water drains 1 vitality point every hour the Chuhkyvi stays in it. They suffer a -2 Strength, -2 Dexterity, and -2 Constitution penalty after the first 6 hours. Stale water turns foul after 2 days at which point death occurs.
- Though Chuhkyvi have poor eyesight out of water, their rebreather gear is equipped with vision enhancement devices that compensate.
- Automatic Languages: Chuhkyvi, Iskalonian, Basic.

ISKALONIAN (CHUHKYVI) COMMONER

Init +0; Defense 10; Spd 10m, swim 14m; VP/WP -10; Atk +0 melee (1d3, punch or 1d8, stinger), +0 ranged; SQ aquatic; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will -1; SZ M; FP 0; Rep 0; Str 11, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 8, Cha 11. Equipment: Rebreather gear, variety of personal belongings. Skills: Craft (any) +4, Knowledge (any) +3, Listen +1, Swim +8 Feats: Exotic Weapon Proficiency (stinger) Species Features: +2 Intelligence, -2 Wisdom; +2 species bonus on Listen checks, +8 species bonus on Swim checks; bonus feat: Exotic Weapon Proficiency (stinger); Aquatic: Cannot breathe longer than one hour out of water without rebreather gear.

Stenaxes

Shrouded in mystery, Stenaxes are a fierce and violent people who fanatically follow the dictates of their god, Vol. Until recently, they ignored off-worlders entirely. They have since been

gang of smugglers looting the ruins of an ancient civilization that once used Kindar's temple.

The Stenaxes worship a statue of their god, Vol. In their eyes, the statue and the god are one and the same, and to lose the statue is to fall out of grace with Vol. When the statue was buried in a quake, the Stenaxes felt disgraced and stopped flying. Duel's gang convinced the Rebels that Kindar was looking for the statue to return it to the Stenaxes, and together, they recovered the statue.

Duel tried to steal the statue and escape, but Governor Matrin, a collector of esoteric artifacts who had sought the

badly mauled to be properly identified.

Soon after the Imperials landed on Stenos, several Stenaxes journeyed off-planet, taking on mercenary jobs or other duties for little pay. This behavior, seemingly inconsistent with their manner toward off-worlders, was part of a larger plan. By placing operatives on Hunter's World, Kabray, Delrakkin, Cilpar, and other planets, the Stenaxes could study other species of the galaxy, sizing up those ripest for conquest. They waited for a signal to attack en masse, and while waiting, learned to operate the advanced technologies found on those worlds.

Unfortunately, no one knew their true motives until it was too late. Ten months after the Battle of Endor, hundreds of Stenaxes suddenly attacked Imperials stationed on their worlds, slaughtering them. Non-military residents put up even less of a fight, and soon all non-Stenaxes were dead. They seized the deadly technology brought to Stenos by the Imperials and launched all-out invasions of Kadril,

Arda-2, Sooma, Alzar, Tandankin, and other worlds along the Gordian Reach. Millions died in the so-called Stenax Massacres, which reduced the planet of Kadril to inhospitable rubble. The only species to survive the bombardment was a colony of semi-intelligent terrapins who settled the planet a decade earlier.

Eventually, New Republic forces man-

aged to defeat the Stenaxes at Tharkos. The surviving Stenax crews were incarcerated, and orbital monitoring posts were built at Stenos to keep an eye on their activities. Historians have since likened the Stenax revolt to that launched by the Yevetha during the Black Fleet crisis.

POLITICS

Observers cannot find any recognizable political structure among the Stenax civilization. Some argue that they barely even qualify as a civilization. Before attacking the off-world populace, they had little contact with others, and only a rare few lived on the ground as traders.

At first, off-worlders dealing with the Stenax traders were wary, unsettled by their perpetually disgusted expressions and lack of social graces. Over time, this soon became accepted as normal. Secretly, the Stenax "traders" watched their every move, sizing them up as opponents. Those flying above also watched the off-worlders' motions, their *kleti* glands allowing them to spy from incredible heights, unseen.

TECHNOLOGY LEVEL

Before the Massacres, Stenax technology was a contradiction in terms. Since then, the New Republic has closely monitored their access to advanced technology.

The remnants of ancient Stenax civilization cover the planet's surface, from a time centuries ago when devastating weather conditions forced them to take shelters at ground-level for several years.

THE STENAX SECRETLY WATCHED THE OFF- WORLDERS' EVERY MOVE ...SIZING THEM UP AS OPPONENTS.

statue for years, arrived to take possession of it. Vol's recovery removed the Stenaxes' flying taboo, and dozens of them swarmed to the scene to demand the statue's return. The Rebels escaped and the smugglers barely talked their way out of the situation. Matrin, as the individual holding the statue at the time, was presumed killed, although his body was too

held responsible for the Stenax massacres which killed thousands. They are considered dangerous and unpredictable.

Personality: Irascible, violent, and ill-tempered. Stenaxes are often quiet and brooding.

Physical Description: Humanoid with large wings and gargoyle-ish faces. A row of bony spikes runs across their shoulders. Sharp claws protrude from their feet, hands, and calves. Stenaxes have rubbery, purple-gray skin and white eyes with tiny pupils. Two muscular cords hang down far below the mouth. Hairless, they have a wide, spine-shaped protrusion running over the head, from their eyes to the top of the neck.

Stenax Homeworld: Stenos

Language: Stenax. Some understand Basic but do not speak it.

Example Names: None are known to any outside the race.

Adventurers: Stenax adventurers gravitate towards soldier and scoundrel classes, as well as some fringers. The reason for this is hidden, although these classes do play to Stenax strengths.

There are no known nobles or Force users among them.

STENAX SPECIES TRAITS

- +2 Strength, +2 Constitution, -4 Charisma, -2 Intelligence, -2 Wisdom. Stenaxes are fearsome enemies, both powerful and ill-tempered. However, their physical abilities are more developed than their mental abilities.
- Medium-size. As Medium-size creatures, Stenaxes have no special bonuses or penalties due to size.
- Stenax base speed is 10 meters on land. Flight base speed is 10 meters with average maneuverability.
- Stenaxes receive a species bonus feat of Infamy.
- +2 species bonus on Listen, Search and Spot checks. • Kleti glands give Stenaxes the ability to see twice as far as humans under low light conditions, retaining the ability to distinguish color and detail.
- Automatic Languages: Stenax.

These were abandoned when no longer needed, and the Stenaxes have done no building since then. As a culture, the Stenaxes are considered technologically stagnant.

STENAXES IN THE GALAXY

Some Stenaxes living off-planet did not take part in the attacks. Though they are being watched from afar by New Republic Intelligence, they have been allowed to continue their off-world existence. Many have settled on Belderone and Kulthis, but it is unknown why those worlds would be of interest to them. Since arriving in that system, the Stenaxes have had barely any contact with the human settlers there, isolating themselves to a previously uninhabited continent. Given this bizarre behavior, sociologists warn that the Massacres could some day happen again.

NOTABLE PERSONALITIES

Stenaxes reveal so little about themselves that no notable personalities are known. They may not even have names.



(A.K.A. THE WINDBORN)

Winged humanoids, the S'kytri hail from Skye, a planet the Empire designated Marat V. Enslaved by the Empire through the machinations of Darth Vader, the S'kytri spent long years in unwilling servi-

tude to Majestrix Kharys, a sadistic S'kytri chosen by Vader to enforce Imperial doctrine. In their native tongue, "S'kytri" means "the Windborn."

APPEARANCE AND BIOLOGY

S'kytri are quite tall for humanoids, many surpassing two meters. S'kytri under 1.8 meters in height are deemed "short" by their standards. The thin, muscular

physiques and chiseled facial features of the S'kytri are considered by some to be among the most beautiful

in the galaxy. As a winged species, they consider excess body weight not only impractical but dangerous for flying.

Although mammalian, S'kytri hatch from eggs. Females of the species give birth to an egg in the same fashion that other mammalian species give birth to live young. After the "birth" of the egg, another week of gestation time passes, during which the female only tends to the egg until it hatches.

Nearly all males have pale blue skin, while the skin of most females is a soft shade of green. A small percentage of the population are born with reversed pigmentation, but the S'kytri consider them an abomination of nature and destroy those babies as soon as they are detected. Hair colors range dramatically on Skye, from violet to yellow to white to maroon,

and most grow their hair in thick, wavy tufts in the center of their bald heads.

Clothing is unimportant to the S'kytri, for too much material creates unwanted wind resistance. Males wear anklets bearing the insignia of their clans, and both genders wear slight coverings to protect their reproductive organs, but little else is worn due to Skye's perpetually warm temperatures.

THE S'KYTRI SEE THEMSELVES AS SUPERIOR TO "WALKERS". THIS PREJUDICE PERVADES THEIR LAWS AND CUSTOMS

TEMPERAMENT

The Windborn see themselves as superior to non-flyers. In their eyes, all who do not fly fall into the single category of "walkers" and are beneath them. This prejudice pervades their laws and their customs at every level. Though strong and well-versed in fighting techniques, the S'kytri abhor war and needless fighting. For this reason, aside from ceremonial spears worn by guardsmen, weapons are strictly prohibited in most Skye cities.

HISTORY AND CULTURE

Few worlds can boast mountains as vast or as beautiful as those on Skye. The S'kytri believe that all things on their world are alive, even the mountains. The City of the Winged People, their governing seat, is

STENAX SOLDIER

Soldier 1; Init +0; Defense 12; Spd 10m, Fly (avg) 14m; VP/WP 11/15; Atk +2 melee (1d4, claws or 2d8, force pike), +1 ranged; SQ flight, kleti glands; SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will -1; SZ M; FP 0; Rep 1; Str 12, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 6.

Equipment: force pike, variety of personal belongings.

Skills: Craft (any) +1, Intimidate +2, Listen +1, Search +5, Spot +3.

Feats: Armor Proficiency (light), Infamy, Toughness, Weapon Group Proficiency (simple weapons, blaster pistols, blaster rifles, heavy weapons, vibro weapons)

Species Features: +2 Strength, +2 Constitution, -4 Charisma, -2 Intelligence, -2 Wisdom; +2 species bonus on Listen, Search and Spot checks; Infamy species bonus feat; kleti glands; flight.

S'kytri (a.k.a. "The Windborn")

The winged inhabitants of Skye are known throughout the galaxy as noble warrior bards. In modern times they have broken free of

the Empire and are beginning to reclaim an honorable position in the galaxy.

Personality: Proud, independent, and usually serious, S'kytri take great stock in tradition and old world values. They deplore violence, though make formidable enemies when provoked. Due to years of economic hardship, a growing counterculture among the young is rebellious and wayward, yet espouses a return to tradition.

Physical Description: S'kytri are winged near-humans, tall and muscular, with handsome human faces. The males have pale blue skin while the females are light olive toned.

S'kytri homeworld: Skye, a.k.a. Marat V Languages: S'kytric, Basic. Once considered a dead language, S'kytric has made a comeback among younger people, artists and musicians who use it as the root of a folk revival.

Example Names: Aragh, Daltrid, Kailél, Deverén, Kharys, Klarymére.

situated halfway up one of the more massive peaks. Legend says that the city was formed from the living rock itself. To reach the Council Tower, visitors must cross an open-air causeway, which presents a problem for unwinged species, discouraging them from visiting.

Ancient Skye was a world of constant war, but over the millennia, sensibility and maturity have replaced violence, and Skye has become a peaceful world, a world of beauty and grace, and a world ripe for conquest. That's precisely what happened when the Empire moved in. When asked how this happened, Lord Aragh of the Highlands gave the following history:

"Years ago, during what humans called the Clone Wars, three Jedi Knights saved Skye from destruction. In gratitude, we swore eternal friendship and fealty to them. Much later, one Jedi returned and told us that all the other Jedi were destroyed—by his hand—including his two comrades. He was much darker, in spirit and in dress, than when we last saw him. He invoked our oath and made Skye an Imperial satrapy to be ruled by Kharys. Kharys was named the Majestrix of Skye, and the governing power of the Patriarch was transferred to her. I retained the title of Patriarch, and some responsibilities that went with that title, but Kharys had final say in all matters. Eventually, she usurped more and more control from the Clan Elders, but we

were powerless to stop her. We had made our oath, and only 'the One' could restore our freedom. And so we waited."

"The One" to whom Aragh referred was an individual prophesied to deliver Skye from Imperial control and defeat Kharys. The S'kytri awaited "the One" for many years, serving Kharys loyally in the meantime but hopeful that his arrival would come soon. They did not know his full name, but it was prophesied that they would know him by the weapon he wore, for he was the son of one of the Jedi who initially saved Skye from destruction. "The One" eventually fulfilled the prophecy and restored power to the Supreme Council. The S'kytri are secretive about "the One's" identity, but he is clearly one "walker" who will always be welcomed on Skye.

POLITICS

For many centuries, S'kytri society was broken into three main strata, each representing a number of clans. These were the Highland Clans, the Lowland Clans, and the Outlanders. The Highlanders and Lowlanders took turns governing, electing a Patriarch to lead all the people of Skye. Leadership changed hands every 42 years, representing the 42 clans

within the three strata. The Highlanders are currently in ascendance, with only seven years until the Lowland Clans rise to power once again.

The Outlanders are allowed one representative on the Supreme Council and do not take part in the rotation of the Patriarch.



S'KYTRI

Adventurers: S'kytri adventurers excel at the scout and noble classes and can be often found among Force users. While adult S'kytri disdain the fringer, scoundrel, and soldier classes, younger members follow these classes almost to spite their elders.

S'KYTRI SPECIES TRAITS

- +2 Strength, +2 Constitution, +2 Wisdom. S'kytri are among the strongest and hardiest near-human races known. Yet with their physical ability comes a mildness and wisdom borne of the lessons of suffering.
- Medium-size. As Medium-size creatures, S'kytri have no special bonuses or penalties due to size.
- S'kytri base speed is 10 meters. Flight base speed is 10 meters with average maneuverability.
- S'kytri receive a +1 species bonus on Will saves.

• Automatic Language: Basic.

S'KYTRI COMMONER

Init +0; Defense 10; Spd 10m, fly (avg) 10m; VP/WP -/13; Atk +1 melee (1d8, longsword), +0 ranged; SQ flight; SV Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +2; SZ M; FP 0; Rep 0; Str 13, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 10. Equipment: variety of personal belongings. Skills: Craft (any) +1, Diplomacy +2, Knowledge (any) +1. Species Features: +2 Strength, +2 Constitution, +2 Wisdom; +1 species bonus on Will saves; flight.

Nagai

Formerly a fear-inspiring enemy and invader, this skilled and mysterious species from far-off Nagi have become a valuable ally to the New Republic.

chal office. Having chosen to live life on the ground, they were deemed "walkers" by the other Clans, profaners of the Sacred Aeries and unworthy candidates for governing. This will, no doubt, some day result in a civil war.

TECHNOLOGY LEVEL

Technology is not important to the S'kytri. On this world without weaponry or clothing, industry is practically non-existent. During Imperial occupation, however, much land was confiscated for munitions factories. This offended the S'kytri, for their religious doctrines proclaimed such weapons a profanity to the Sacred Aeries. However, their oath to the "walkers" forbade them from contesting. After the coming of "the One," the Supreme Council's first ruling was to destroy the factories.

TRADE AND TECHNOLOGY

Trade with other worlds has increased in the years since the coming of "the One." Whereas the S'kytri once kept to the lands of their Clansmen, they can now be found at the Great Fair on Tirahnn, or at the massive Trade Shows of Bazarre and Tun Wala, selling trinkets from their world and performing dramatic recreations of the Initiation Hunt that all hatchlings must undergo.

S'KYTRI IN THE GALAXY

Though trade with other worlds has increased, few S'kytri relocate off-planet on a permanent basis. At heart, they still believe themselves superior to non-flying species, and to live among "walkers" would

be an unforgivable profanity against the Sacred Aeries. Therefore, those who travel among the stars almost always come back home to Skye.

NOTABLE PERSONALITIES

- » Aragh, Lord of the Highlands and current Patriarch
- » Daltrid, Lord of the Lowlands
- » Kailél, Lord of the Outlanders
- » Deverén, Speaker of the Supreme Council
- » Kharys, the Majestrix of Skye
- » Klarymére, former Patriarch of the S'kytri who swore his people's loyalty to the Jedi during the Clone Wars, ultimately condemning them to decades of Imperial oppression.



This species of mysterious, knife-wielding warriors made several incursions into Imperial and Alliance space fleeing Tofs oppressors. They claimed to be from another galaxy, but considering the distance involved, Alliance analysts determined that they must hail from the Unknown Regions and lied about their origins to keep their homeworld hidden.

APPEARANCE AND BIOLOGY

Tall and exceedingly thin, with straight black hair and pale, almost white skin, the Nagai carry the appearance of handsome but emaciated specters. Some fear their appearance while others assume them to be weak and sickly. The Nagai are aware of

the effect their look has on other humanoids and exploit it, letting others underestimate them until the time is right to show their true skills. Those who underestimate a Nagai only do it once.

Styles vary widely among the Nagai, but many wear their hair long and untied, hiding portions of their face like a half-closed curtain. This adds to their mystery, as does the seeming lack of standard uniform among their troops. Each Nagai wears his or her own style of clothing, depending on personal taste and the image he or she wishes to convey.

TEMPERAMENT

Two overriding factors determine the temperament of a Nagai: the demands of honor and fear of "the Old Enemy" that oppressed and terrorized them for so long.

Angered Nagai kill without hesitation if it suits their purpose, particularly if honor demands it. If there is no honor in killing, or if their foe is weak, they take no pleasure from victory. To a Nagai, honor is all. If one's honor is stripped away, whether forcefully or unknowingly, one must take one's own life. If one fails to do so, it is the duty of others to fulfill that honor. Nagai are as passionate in loving as they are in killing, for honor tells them that devotion to one's lover is the most important devotion one can offer, even if that devotion is not returned.

Having been oppressed for centuries, the Nagai have few sympathies aside from familial ties. Determined to free themselves from the Tofs, they let nothing stand in their way. They have already

Personality: Intense, focused and disciplined. Often highly skilled and motivated martial artists. Loyal and artistic. Nagai possess a high degree of intelligence coupled with a bizarre sense of humor.

Physical Description: Nagai are exceedingly lean and tall near-humans. Handsome with pale, almost white skin. Black hair is common, but other colors exist or are created. Their hairstyles vary, and though shocking by human standards, are unique artistic expressions unto themselves. Their clothing marks the same love of individualistic expression.

Nagai homeworld: Nagi. Once believed to be from a separate galaxy, it has been discovered that their system exists within one of the far distant wisps on the very edge of the galaxy.

Languages: Nagaian, Basic.

Example Names: Krai, Ozrei, Bey, Den Siva, "Tai," Lusubrin "Brin."

Adventurers: Nagai came into the galaxy as scouts and soldiers for their homeworld but have emerged as free people who pursue any class.

NAGAI SPECIES TRAITS

- » +2 Dexterity, -2 Strength. What Nagai lack in physical prowess, they make up for in agility.
- » Medium size. As Medium-size creatures, Nagai have no special bonuses or penalties due to size.
- » Nagai base speed is 10 meters.
- » -1 species penalty on Fortitude saves, +2 species bonus on Reflex saves.
- » Soothing voice: +2 species bonus on attempts to influence others.
- » Automatic Languages: Nagaian, Basic.

braved the worst hardships under the Tofs, so they fear little else, nor do they let concern for others take precedence over their drive for personal freedom.

HISTORY AND CULTURE

Three centuries ago, the Tofs visited the Nagai homeworld of Nagi. At the time, the Nagai were at the height of their civilization, with beautiful cities of wire and crystal. Just discovering the rudiments of

new home, but more importantly, never again to lie helpless before a greater force.

To this end, the Nagai sent scouts into the galaxy to find targets for conquest. Among those sent was Krai H'voc, who settled on Corellia and gave birth to a half-breed child named Bey. Seeing a galaxy ripe for conquest, Krai told her people to delay attack until the Rebels beat the Empire. The Nagai waited until after Palpatine's death, when the galaxy was most vulnerable.

When the conquest was set to commence, a Nagai commander calling himself Knife formed a slavery ring on

Kashyyyk. Rebels stopped the slavers, but Knife escaped. Soon after, he fostered distrust between Rebel factions on Saijo, using a double agent

named Durne to trick each group into thinking the other worked for the Empire.

The Nagai found an ally in Lumiya, the self-styled "Dark Lady of the Sith," who was given a Nagai aide, Den Siva. They established bases across the galaxy as a precursor to invasion. The first step towards invasion was an attack on a diplomatic conference at Kabray to capture Alliance leaders. A Rebel contingent aided by Zeltron teenagers managed to push them back and capture the attackers, including Knife himself.

Lumiya and Siva killed twenty captured Rebels on Kinooine, a barren world on the

fringe of the galactic perimeter. An Alliance strike team fought the Nagai at Kinooine, but an entire Nagai invasion fleet arrived, aided by Imperial remnants.

Meanwhile, Bey and former Mandalorian Protector Fenn Shysa formed a resistance group when Nagai began attacking worlds near Mandalore. To fight their common foe, Fenn's group joined the Alliance at Endor. However, the telepathic Hoojibs scanned Nagai hostages taken at Kabray and learned of an impending attack. The Alliance tried to evacuate Endor, but the Nagai fleet arrived, freed Knife's team, and launched cyborg fighters called Maccabree Warriors.

The fight went badly for the Alliance and Mandalorian forces. The Nagai seemed to know their plans, indicating a traitor in their ranks. Evidence revealed the traitor to be Bey, who learned of his origins when he crashed on Nagi and was welcomed by his mother's family. With Bey's involvement uncovered, the battle turned. The Maccabrees were destroyed, and Lumiya's forces retreated.

The Nagai next attacked Iskalon and enslaved the School using deadly sonic blasters. When the Iskalonians refused to build a base for the Nagai, they were slaughtered. However, Rebel heroes aided by a local legend named Kiro quelled the Nagai incursion.

Changes in the Alliance/Nagai antagonism began when the Nagai Twelfth Squadron engaged "the Old Enemy" in the Trenwyth System. A passing Rebel crew

THE NAGAI LET OTHERS UNDERESTIMATE THEM UNTIL THE TIME IS RIGHT TO SHOW THEIR TRUE SKILLS

hyperspace travel, they sent an unmanned craft out to chart their five-planet star system, unaware how this would change their civilization forever.

A Tof warship spotted the ship and tracked its course to learn who sent it. Finding the Nagai ripe for plunder, the Tofs immediately attacked, enslaving many Nagai. The Nagai proved to be natural warriors however, doing what no other Tof victim had done: They survived, and kept on surviving for over three hundred years. Enough Nagai evaded capture that they devoted all remaining resources to space travel and defense. They vowed to find a

NAGAI COMMONER

Init +1 (+1 Dex); Defense 11 (+1 Dex); Spd 10m; VP/WP 0/13; Atk -1 melee (1d6-1, Tehk'la blade), +1 ranged; SQ soothing voice; SV Fort -1, Ref +3, Will +0; SZ M; FP 0; Rep 6; Str 8, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Equipment: Tehk'la blade, variety of personal belongings.

Skills: Craft (any) +1, Knowledge (any) +2, Survival +1

Species Features: +2 Dexterity, -2 Strength; -1 species penalty on Fortitude saves, +2 species bonus on Reflex saves; soothing voice.

Zeltrons

Known as the most fun-loving and convivial species in the galaxy, the near-human Zeltrons take recreation and the pursuit of pleasure to new heights.

Personality: Gregarious, warm, lustful and merry, Zeltrons love parties and people. There is another side to them, however,

which comes to some with age, trials and suffering, and that is a deep melancholy, fervent passion for justice or a cause, and an intense loneliness and desire for a lasting bond.

Physical Description: Zeltrons are near humans, with skin colors ranging from pink to deep crimson. Nearly all are considered (by human standards) shockingly beautiful and handsome. They keep themselves in good shape and have high metabolisms which allows them to indulge in their culinary cravings.

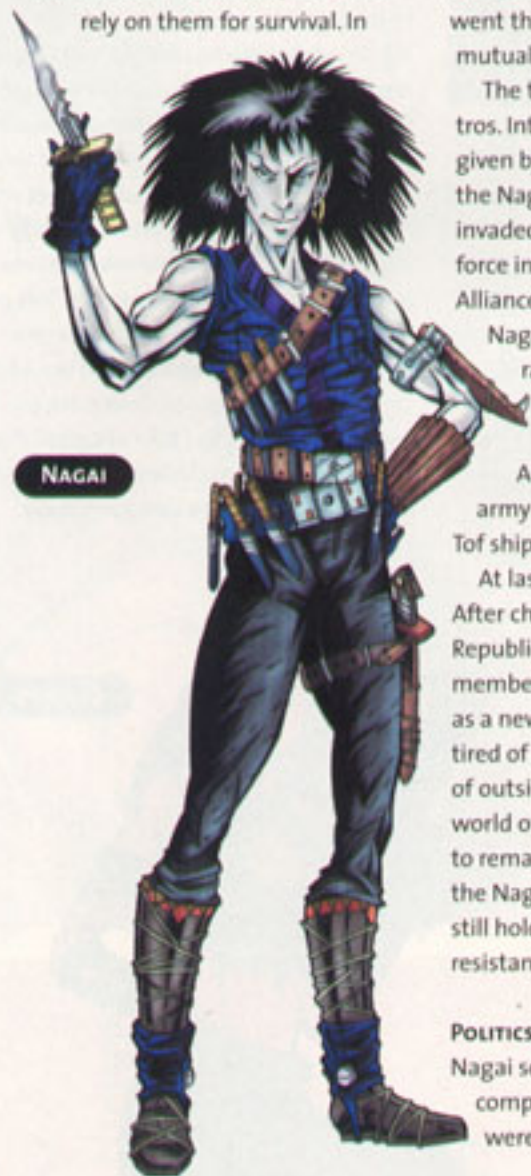
Zeltron homeworld: Zeltros

Languages: Basic.

Example Names: Dani, Bahb, Marruc, Jahn, Rahuhl, Arno, Leonie, Heigren, Spenori.

Adventurers: Zeltron adventurers, like their human counterparts are found in all classes. Whether nobles or soldiers, fringers, scoundrels or scouts, Zeltrons pursue their vocations with fiery passion. The most difficult times are had by force-sensitive Zeltrons attempting to pursue Jedi training, as the tenants of the

stopping to effect ship repairs found a terrified young Nagai unable to speak their language and too injured to fight. Though he distrusted the Rebels, he had to rely on them for survival. In



time, both sides came to respect each other, hiding together while Tof soldiers killed the other Nagai. Facing impossible odds, they survived until the Tofs left, then went their separate ways with newfound mutual respect.

The turning point in the war was Zeltros. Interrupting a huge ceremonial party given by the king and queen of Zeltros, the Nagai and several Maccabrees invaded, followed moments later by a Tof force intent on capturing the Nagai. The Alliance extended a peace offer to the Nagai, who reluctantly agreed. The war raged until a showdown on Saijo, which Tof Prince Sereno used as his personal base. The combined Alliance, Mandalorian, and Nagai army struck hard at Saijo, crippling the Tof ships and forcing a surrender.

At last, the Nagai could live in peace. After changing its name to the New Republic, the Alliance offered them full membership and a chance to rebuild Saijo as a new home. Many Nagai had grown tired of defining their lives by the actions of outsiders though, and set out to find a world of their own. Brin and others chose to remain in New Republic space, while the Nagai fleet departed to fight the Tofs still holding Nagai, with help from Shysa's resistance fighters.

POLITICS

Nagai society, before the Tofs invaded, was comprised of a series of Circles, which were broken down into a series of Sub-

circles. An individual's place in the Circles was determined by birth, but it was possible to move up the ranks of Sub-circles through tests of physical prowess. Fighting skills are important to the Nagai, as both a sign of status and a form of meditation. Many customs of daily life involve exercises with Tehk'la blades, Swiftcut foils, or longswords.

During the Tofs' reign, this system broke down, as Circles intermeshed for the common purpose of survival. With entire Sub-circles eradicated by the Tofs, many lower levels moved up by default and began mating with those previously considered above them. As a result, the system of Circles is no longer the solid institution it once was, and some radical thinkers talk of abandoning it.

TECHNOLOGY LEVEL

Nagai technology is advanced. Their ships defy common design sense, but are capable of far greater speed and efficiency than most New Republic vessels.

The Nagai sonic blaster emits a controlled harmonic wave which causes intense pain. It can be set for a variety of damages, from "light stun" to "deteriorate." At its highest settings, it can rend flesh on a molecular level, and most Nagai officers believe it is a dishonorable way to fight. General Kob, leader of the force that invaded Iskalon, disagrees (which is unsurprising, since he designed the weapon).

Other inventions created by Kob that meet with wider appeal include

Jedi generally discourage the indulgence of strong emotion. Still, Jedi Zeltrons do exist, although rarely as consulars.

ZELTRONS SPECIES TRAITS

- +4 Charisma, -2 Wisdom. Zeltrons are highly sociable and engaging. However, they can also be shallow and foolish in their pursuit of pleasure.
- Medium-size. As Medium-size creatures, Zeltrons have no special bonuses or penalties due to size.
- Zeltron base speed is 10 meters.
- +3 species bonus on Entertain checks. Zeltrons are natural performers.
- +1 species bonus on Initiative. Zeltrons can react to people quickly due to their natural ability to sense emotion.
- Empathy: Zeltrons surround themselves with pleasure due the fact that they feel others' emotions as though they were their own. They receive a -2 species penalty to all rolls when in the

presence of Dark Siders or anyone projecting strong negative emotions.

- Pheromones: Zeltrons can project their emotions onto others. This ability gives them +2 species bonus on all attempts to influence others.
- Automatic Language: Basic.

ZELTRON COMMONER

Init +1; Defense 10; Spd 10m; VP/WP 0/11; Atk +1 melee (1d3, punch), +0 ranged; SQ empathy, pheromones; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will -1; SZ M; FP 0; Rep 2; Str 11, Dex 11, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 14. Equipment: variety of personal belongings.

Skills: Diplomacy +3, Entertain (any) +7, Knowledge (any) +1

Species Features: +4 Charisma, -2 Wisdom; +3 species bonus on Entertain checks; +1 species bonus on Initiative; empathy, pheromones.

electromesh armor, an improved model of temperature-control body glove designed to assist its wearer in battle, and advances in cloaking technology.

NAGAI IN THE GALAXY

Since the downfall of the Tofs, Nagai are increasingly more common among the general populace of the galaxy. Many who stayed behind when the Fleet went in search of a new homeworld have started families, either with other Nagai or with members of other humanoid species (no self-respecting Nagai would consider mating with a non-humanoid). The first half-Nagai children since Bey have been born on several Alliance worlds.

Bey was eventually revealed to be a double agent working for Admiral Ackbar to defeat the Tofs from within. Currently, he works for New Republic Intelligence.

PERSONALITY NOTES

Nagai rarely lose their tempers in front of others, which is considered a sign of weakness among higher Circles. They act quickly, and out of necessity, but not out of irrational anger. In fact, one of the most disturbing aspects of the Nagai is that they always seem in control, their voices calm and low-key, their gazes steady and unyielding, whether greeting a friend or driving a knife into an enemy. It is thought that this, like many Nagai traits, is done intentionally, to unnerve others.

NOTABLE PERSONALITIES

- Krai H'voc, a Nagai scout sent to Corellia as a precursor to invasion
- Commander Ozrei "Knife" N'takkiloman-drife, Krai's son, who forged a truce with the Alliance during the Tof invasion
- Bey, Knife's half-Corellian brother
- Lieutenant Den Siva, Lumiya's aide
- Taikotelai "Tai" Akikoma, a foot soldier aided by Rebels in the Trenwyth System
- Lusubrin "Brin" T'shkal, famous for his exploits at the Broken Tusk fighting arena
- General Kruskob "Kob" Tiltanka, enslaver of Iskalon
- Mendo, Rei, and Taru, members of the Kinooine attack force
- Lieutenant Hol B'shaki, head of the Endor attack force

- Captain Harmon Sho, head of the Zeltros attack force.



Zeltrons are known the galaxy over as unabashed hedonists. All members of the species encourage the pursuit of pleasure in all its forms. They are particularly popular among spacers, fringers, and Imperial officers. Often overlooked though, is that some Zeltrons transcend these superficial qualities to become passionately loyal and deeply humane beings. Unfortunately, not many attain this level of maturity, so their scandalous reputation lives on.

APPEARANCE AND BIOLOGY

Beauty is not just a standard on Zeltros, it's a way of life. The pursuit of beauty and pleasure is next to divinity. Though humanoid, Zeltrons differ from humans in a few key aspects. Their skin is bright pink, a pigmentary reaction to the unique radiation emitted by their sun. They also secrete an overwhelmingly potent pheromone. They consciously control their pheromones and can affect specific targets or entire crowds at will.

Zeltrons are empathic, able to feel the emotions of others and project their own emotions to those around them. This might account for the importance they place on pleasure and love—when one person experiences negative emotions, everyone experiences them. So their entire culture has evolved around the goal of mutual satisfaction.

TEMPERAMENT

If ever a species epitomized the term "friendly," the Zeltrons would be that species. Their friendliness extends to all within their reach, and doesn't end at a handshake. Deeming Zeltrons promiscuous is as big an understatement as declaring space "a bunch of stars," and the Zeltrons

are proud of this fact. Promiscuity is neither a taboo nor a curse on Zeltros, and monogamy is often treated as a quaint fad.

HISTORY AND CULTURE

A lush world with beautiful architecture, breathtaking landscapes, and a reputation for constant satisfaction, Zeltros has long attracted visitors from all sectors of the galaxy. Urno Tamba, a noted Holonet critic once called Zeltros "the ultimate party experience." Zeltrons hold massive celebrations for practically any event. This penchant for partying pervades all levels of society, from the lowest class of workers right up to the King and Queen themselves. On Zeltros, the Rule of Celebration is: All are invited regardless of who hosts the party, and no one ever goes away unsatisfied.



Zeltros has been invaded 12 times in the past six centuries. However, once most invaders are exposed to Zeltron pheromones, they give up hostile intentions and join in the festivities. Many potential invaders even take up residence on the planet and begin hosting parties themselves. As such, the Zeltrons do not worry about such trivial matters as planetary defenses, military forces, or war, relying on their natural biology for defense. This is not to say that they are

one's own personal pleasure is dampened if others are not equally pleased. As such, everyone on Zeltros has a strong motive to treat others nicely. There is a common phrase on Zeltros: "The first to cause pain is the next to feel it, and the first to deny pleasure is the next denied."

TECHNOLOGY LEVEL

Zeltron technology is on par with most spacefaring worlds. They possess space travel, advanced agricultural and industrial methods, and excellent knowledge of medicine, particularly antibiotics. The Zeltrons perfected interplanetary travel millennia ago. Their star system neighbors Ambria, Amara, and Onderon in the Stenness Node, which allows them access to one of the oldest known Hyper-space Terminals.

Zeltron scientists have provided the galaxy with numerous advancements and refinements. Ever the proponents of enjoyment, they also created much of the technology that went into the development of the Pleasure Domes at Hologram Fun World.

TRADE AND TECHNOLOGY

Zeltron artists are renowned for their erotic sculptures, paintings, and other works. Many off-world collectors specialize in obtaining such items, so trade between the Zeltron Artistry Guild and the galactic art market is at an all-time premium.

Zeltron courtesans known as cafarel, are also in high demand. They strive to fulfill any physical desire. Many crimelords, particularly Hutts, take special interest in these Zeltron pleasers. Since the Hutts pay extremely well, the cafarel don't seem to mind the arrangement.

ZELTRONS IN THE GALAXY

Because of their popularity, and lives spent pursuing gratification, Zeltrons are common in the galaxy, particularly at spaceports where they can find many prospective mates. Since many Zeltrons also love gambling, these locations serve two purposes for them. For those living on the fringe, for whom it can be difficult to find companionship, the ever-willing Zeltrons are a welcome respite.

Many Zeltrons have settled on Constanica, whose humanoid population is telepathic. The first Zeltron ambassador to that world found the experience of intimacy with a telepath so empathically stimulating that she sent an immediate dispatch to her world, urging others to follow. Within weeks, an entire colony of Zeltrons arrived at Constanica. Considering the Zeltrons' natural inducements, the Constancians were happy to oblige.

PERSONALITY NOTES

Zeltrons experience and express their emotions much more deeply than most others, to the point that non-Zeltrons might find contact with them a bit overwhelming. An aroused Zeltron rarely takes "no" for an answer, and a Zeltron mourns to the exclusion of all else.

NOTABLE PERSONALITIES

- Dani, a partner of Rik Duel who joined the Rebellion
- Bahb, Marruc, Jahn, and Rahuhl, teenage attachés to the Rebellion
- King Arno and Queen Leonie, monarchs of Zeltros
- Governor Heigren, leader of the Northern Province
- Governor Spenori, leader of the Southern Province. 

BEAUTY IS NOT JUST A STANDARD ON ZELTROS. IT'S A WAY OF LIFE.

unable fighters, for in striving for beauty, Zeltrons stay in peak physical condition. While not usually trained warriors, they still can be formidable combatants.

Soon after the Battle of Endor, their formidability was put to the test when Zeltros was invaded by two species immune to their phenomenal attraction, the Nagai and the Tofs. King Arno and Queen Leonie hosted a huge celebration for Alliance visitors. Nagai forces stormed the ballroom, and the attending Zeltrons immediately began emitting pheromones (much to the delight and dismay of several foreign dignitaries). They were no help. The Nagai's advantage did not last long, for their enemy, the Tofs, invaded that same day. The Alliance and Nagai called a truce to defeat the Tofs, and the Zeltrons had yet another reason to party. The resultant celebration is said to have lasted for two months, breaking the standing record. Upon learning that they'd broken the record, Arno and Leonie immediately held another party to celebrate.

POLITICS

Zeltros's political structure is the ultimate democracy. All members of society, regardless of class or wealth, have the same right to gratification, and the government goes to great lengths to rectify any situation on Zeltros where someone appears unhappy. This was not always the case. Like all worlds, Zeltros has had its share of despots and tyrants. However, tyrants are few and far between, for Zeltron empathic skills prevent one person from committing atrocities without experiencing others' pain, and

Further information concerning the alien species discussed above might be in the original *Marvel Star Wars* issues that introduced or featured them. Here's where to look:

Em'li:	issues 60, 62, and 63 (by David Michelinie)
Iskalonians:	issues 74-76, 82, 87, 90, 92, 95-97, and 102 (by Jo Duffy)
Stenaxes:	issues 70-72, 77, and 85 (by Jo Duffy)
S'kytri:	annual 1 (by Chris Claremont)
Nagai:	issues 91, 93, 95-97, and 99-107 (by Jo Duffy)
Zeltrons:	issues 70-73, 77, 82, 87, 90, 92, 95-97, and 103-107 (by Jo Duffy)

A CERTAIN particularly dangerous Dug glared through the dimly-lit shop at a young human boy. "Chess ko, shag," he growled. "Mo killee ma klounkee."

Anakin Skywalker glared back. "You be careful, Sebulba. The next time we race, I'll leave you in the dust."

"Do I hear a grudge match?" interjected a guttural voice. Anakin's owner, Watto the Toydarian junk merchant, flew lazily in from the junkyard behind the shop. "Done!" he cried, grinning. "You race tomorrow, I think, yes. The Boonta training course ... say, first sunrise? Just the two of you?"

Sebulba grinned, then threw a dark look at Anakin. "Me teesa du marra, shag," he said, and turned away, throwing sand at the young human as he went.

Anakin wiped the sand off his face and watched the Dug go. Watto was beside himself with glee. "I'm going to be rich!" he cackled. "Ganda doe wallya, peedunkell! I need to go place some bets!" Watto drifted out the front door, muttering greedily to himself.

Anakin Skywalker was both excited and uncomfortable. He was sure he could beat Sebulba—he'd seen him race, and the Dug wasn't really that great. But he also had to admit that this would be only his second Podrace—and he'd lost the first. He hadn't even finished.

It suddenly occurred to Anakin that by this time tomorrow, he could be dead.

TATOOINE

GRUDGE MATCH

BY J. D. WIKER



PODRACING IS POPULAR IN THE OUTER Rim territories because it is fast, brutal, and spectacular. On some worlds the courses are laid out with Podracer safety in mind, but on Tatooine tracks are unapologetically dangerous.

Tatooine Grudge Match is a game that recreates a deadly Podrace between Anakin Skywalker and his arch-rival Sebulba, the most famous (and successful) Podracer in the Outer Rim. One player plays as Anakin, the other as Sebulba. Each tries to be the first to successfully complete three laps around the Boonta Eve training course.

What You Need to Play

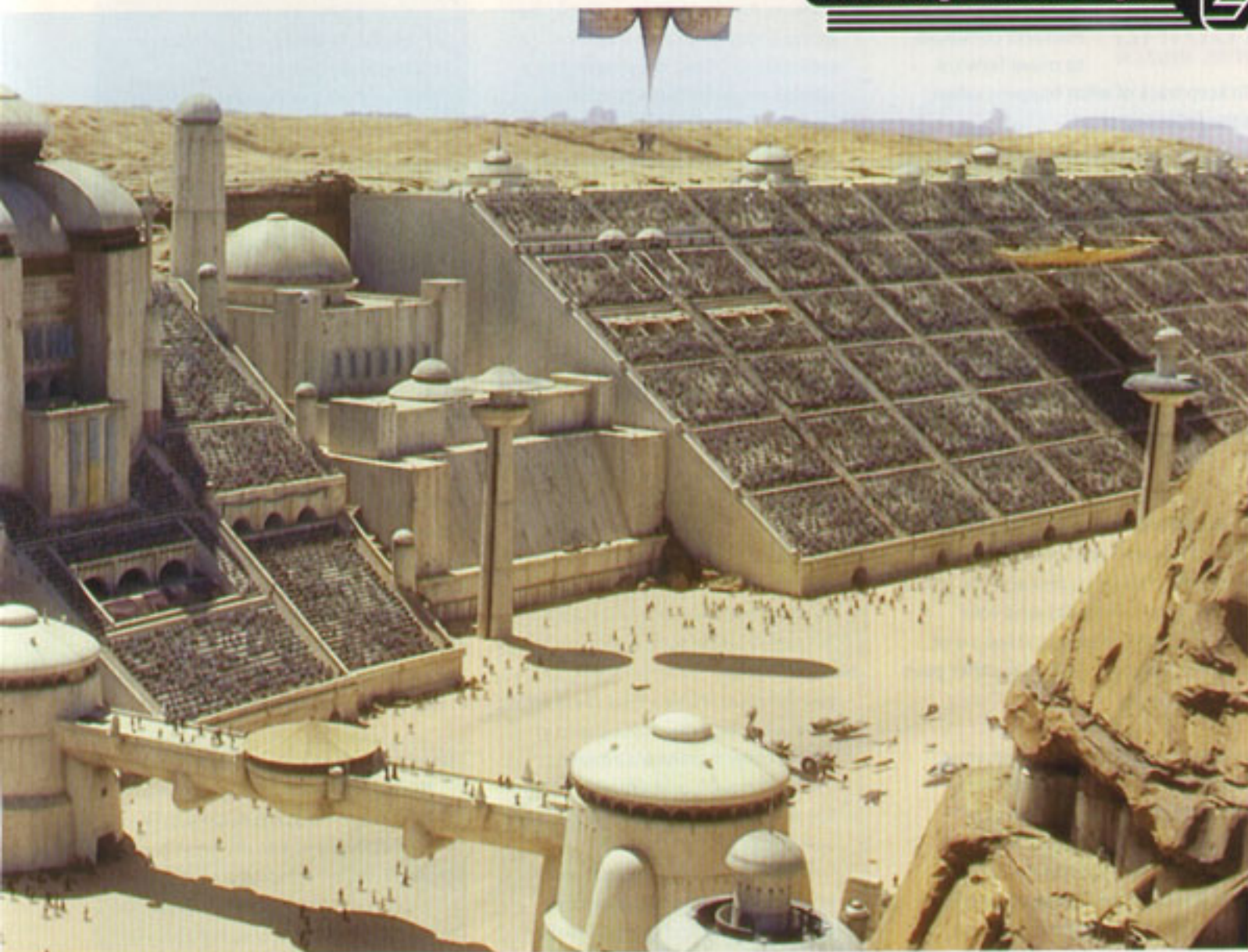
At the end of the rules is a record sheet for each racer's Podracer. Feel free to photocopy them to replay as many times as you like. Each player also needs

a pencil to mark the record sheet, a counter to mark current speed on the record sheet, and a different counter to represent your Podracer's current position on the record sheet. Finally, you need a 20-sided die (d20), a 6-sided die (d6), and a 4-sided die (d4).

Reading the Racing Record Sheet

The record sheets contain information familiar to anyone who has played the *STAR WARS Roleplaying Game*.

PILOT DATA: The Pilot Data section of the record sheet gives values for how well both character's can pilot their Podracers (Pilot skill), and repair damage (Repair skill). There's also a rating for the pilot's reflexes (Initiative).



PODRACER DATA: Directly below the pilot data is a section for the Podracer's statistics. This involves podracer-specific factors such as Traction, Turning, Acceleration, Brake, and Top Speed. These terms, and how they're used, are explained below:

Traction: Add this number to your d20 roll when you try to Regain Control or are Bumped.

Turning: Add this number to your d20 roll when you attempt to Turn.

Acceleration: Add this number to your d20 roll when you attempt to Accelerate.

Brake: Add this number to your d20 roll when you attempt to Decelerate.

Top Speed: Add this number to your d20 roll when you attempt to Maintain Speed.

Winning the Race

The course consists of a series of stretches of track, with various conditions applying to those stretches. The Podracers must maneuver past each as they follow the course. Passing a hazard requires a Pilot check (roll d20 and add modifiers) against a Difficulty Class (DC) listed in the condition's description. The roll plus modifiers must be higher than the DC to succeed.

The race ends when either Anakin or Sebulba successfully maneuvers past the final stretch on the third lap. That Podracer wins the race.

Rolling the Dice

To determine what happens when a pilot attempts an action, roll a d20, add your Pilot skill, and then add all appropriate situation modifiers (see below). You also may have to roll a d4 or a d6 occasionally.

MODIFIERS TO ROLLS: A Podracer's speed and damage might modify a roll. Before you roll the d20 for a Pilot check, total all the modifiers summarized on the chart below:

SITUATION	MODIFIER
Low Speed	no modifier
High Speed	-2
Boost Speed	-6
Pod Damaged	-5
Pod Crippled	-10

Racing Actions

Action in a Podrace proceeds in rounds, just like in STAR WARS RPG combat situations. During each round, a pilot can perform two actions. Example actions include accelerating, decelerating, or attacking the other Podracer. Between

actions, the Podracer continues to move forward.

To keep track of what happens when, use the following chart:

ROUND SEQUENCE
1. Roll initiative.
2. Move (based on current speed).
3. Resolve track conditions.
4. First action.
5. Move (based on current speed).
6. Resolve track conditions.
7. Second action.

ROLL INITIATIVE: Unlike *STAR WARS* RPG combat, Podracers roll their initiative every round. Roll a d20 and add the pilot's Initiative bonus. The pilot who rolls higher goes first, resolving steps 2-7 of the Round Sequence. Then the other pilot resolves steps 2-7.

MOVE: Before you take an action, your Podracer hurtles forward a number of positions in the course, known as "stretches." During steps 2 and 5 of a round, move your track counter ahead 1 stretch (for Low Speed), 2 stretches (for High Speed), or 3 stretches (for Boost Speed).

RESOLVE TRACK CONDITIONS: Take note of each stretch as your Podracer enters it. If a stretch includes a hazard of some kind, you must succeed at a Pilot check to maneuver around it. The specific track condition you encounter gives you the DC for the check. If you fail the check, your Podracer passes the stretch, but stops at the beginning of the next stretch, regardless of speed. You also may have to apply damage to your pod and reduce your speed. You can proceed from there on your next Move.

ACTION: After your Podracer moves, you can attempt to speed up, slow down, maintain your current speed, or try to force your opponent off the track with a Pilot check. How each action works is explained below:

Accelerate: This action is an attempt to gain speed. Accelerating by 1 speed category (Neutral to Low, for example)

is DC 10. Accelerating by 2 speed categories (from Neutral to High, for example), is DC 20. Accelerating by 3 speed categories (from Neutral to Boost) is DC 30. A vehicle can't Accelerate more than three speed categories in a single action.

If a pilot fails an Accelerate attempt, the Podracer continues at its current speed for its next Move.

Decelerate: This action slows a vehicle down. Decelerating by 1 speed category (Boost to High, for example) is DC 0. Decelerating by 2 speed categories (from Boost to Low, for example), is DC 5. Decelerating by 3 speed categories (from Boost to Neutral) is DC 15. A vehicle can't Decelerate more than three speed categories in a single action.

If a pilot fails a Decelerate attempt, the Podracer continues at its current speed for its next Move.

Maintain Speed: This is fairly easy, but you still must make a Pilot check to keep your pod from drifting into a wall or other hazard. Maintaining Low Speed is DC 0. Maintaining High Speed is DC 5. Maintaining Boost Speed is DC 10.

If a pilot fails a Maintain Speed attempt, the pod slows down by 1 speed category, and suffers 1d6 damage as it bounces off an obstruction.

Bump: You move your Podracer close to your opponent's pod and give it a nudge—hopefully knocking it off course. You can only attempt this action when you and your opponent are in the same stretch at the beginning of the action.

Both you and your opponent make Pilot checks. Whoever rolls lower gets bumped off course.

While off course, every check becomes more difficult. You must roll all checks twice, including action rolls, and any checks required by track conditions. Then you must use the lower of the two results.

You regain control when you succeed at a check (even with the lower roll). At that point you only need to make a single roll again for checks. An off-course pilot cannot be bumped again until he is back on course.

Damage

Each Podracer has a damage track. Starting on the left, mark off one box on your damage track for every point of damage your Podracer takes. Mark off all the green boxes before the yellow ones, and all the yellow ones before the red. The more damage a Podracer takes, the less effective it is in the race. Damage conditions are:

Damaged: When a Podracer has filled the empty boxes in the green area of its damage track, it is damaged. The pilot suffers a -5 penalty on all checks.

Crippled: When a Podracer has no more empty boxes in the yellow area of its damage track, it is crippled. The pilot suffers a -10 penalty on all checks.

Destroyed: When a vehicle is reduced to 0 hull points it is destroyed. The remaining player automatically wins.

REPAIRING DAMAGE: You can take an action to try to repair damage to your Podracer. This requires a Repair check, and the DC of



Anakin is menaced by the surly Dug. ▲



Young Anakin bears down for the race of a lifetime. ▲

the check is the same as the damage condition penalty (either 5 or 10). Remember to apply speed and damage modifiers. If the Repair check succeeds, restore 1d6 damage points to the Podracer.

Special Rules

Anakin and Sebulba each have a special ability that gives them an edge in a Podracer. Anakin can use the Force to help his rolls. Sebulba cheats.

ANAKIN: Once during the race, Anakin can call on the Force to help him. When he does, he gets to roll an additional d6 and add the result to all of his checks. He can continue adding the result of the roll to his checks until he fails a check.

SEBULBA: Once during the race, after the first turn, Sebulba can attack Anakin's Podracer with his flame jets. He can only do this if he starts an action in the same stretch as Anakin, and only if both he and Anakin are moving at the same speed. Anakin's Podracer automatically suffers 10 points of damage.

Setting Up

When you're ready to start the race, each player selects one Podracer—Anakin Skywalker or Sebulba. Then put a speed counter on the "Neutral" position of the speed indicator on your Podracer.

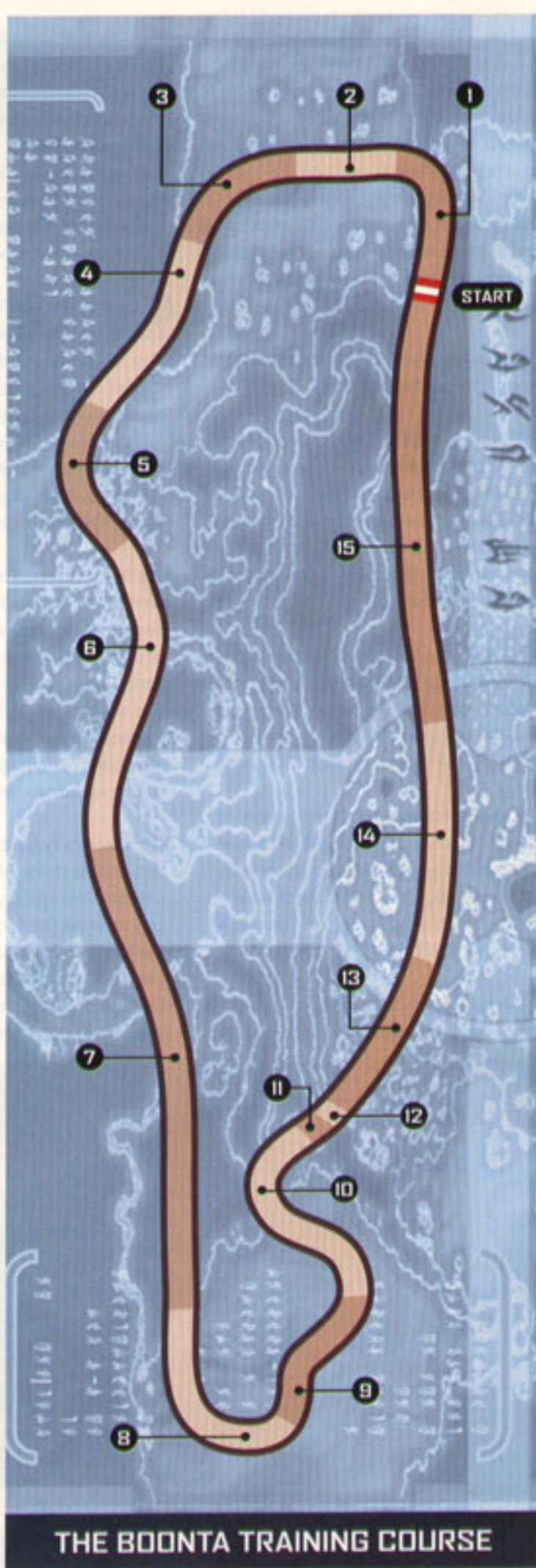
Each player then rolls Initiative separately, adding his or her racer's Initiative bonus to the roll on the d20. Whoever gets a higher roll goes first. If it's a tie, roll again.

Boonta Training Course

The large numbers below correspond to the track stretches depicted to the right. Remember to check for hazards and DC numbers as you enter each stretch.

1 FIRST TURN: Just past the starting line is a 90° turn. To negotiate the turn, a pilot must make a Pilot check (DC 15). Roll a d20, add your Pilot skill bonus, and add the Podracer's Turning bonus to try to get 15 or higher. Remember to subtract speed and damage modifiers. If the check fails, the vehicle slows by one speed category and suffers 1d4 points of damage.

2 STRAIGHTAWAY: The track straightens out for a short distance. There are no hazards here, so it's a good time to accelerate.



THE BOONTA TRAINING COURSE

3 SECOND TURN: The track makes a sharp jog to the left.

To successfully make the turn, a pilot must make a Pilot check (DC 10). Roll a d20, add your Pilot skill bonus, and add the Podracer's Turning bonus to try to get 10 or higher. Again, remember to subtract speed and damage modifiers. If the check fails, the vehicle slows down by one category, but suffers no damage.

4 STRAIGHTAWAY: The track runs straight again here with no hazards.

5 THIRD TURN: The track veers to the left again. To make the turn, a pilot must succeed at a Pilot check (DC 10). Roll, add Pilot skill, Turning bonus, and speed and damage modifiers. If the check fails, the vehicle slows down by one category, but doesn't suffer any damage.

6 STRAIGHTAWAY: Here's another clear space, with high cliff walls on either side. If a pilot fails a Pilot check here (for any reason), his Podracer suffers 1d6 points of damage from bouncing off of the walls.

7 STRAIGHTAWAY: Just like the sixth stretch, this is a long, straight section of track with high cliff walls on either side. Again, if a pilot fails a Pilot check here, his Podracer suffers 1d6 points of damage as he ricochets off a wall.

8 FIRST TUNNEL TURN: This isn't really a tunnel, but the walls are so high and close

together that you can't see the sky above. This turn is pretty sharp, requiring a Pilot check (DC 10). Remember to apply the Podracer's Turning bonus and speed and damage modifiers.

If any action fails in the tunnel turn, the Podracer scrapes the tunnel wall, taking 1d6 points of damage and slowing down by one speed category.

9 SECOND TUNNEL TURN: This turn jogs back the opposite direction of the first tunnel turn. A pilot must attempt a Pilot check (DC 10) to pass through. Remember to add the pod's Turning bonus.

If any action fails in the tunnel turn, the Podracer scrapes the tunnel wall, taking 1d6 points of damage and slowing down by one speed category.

10 THIRD TUNNEL TURN: The tunnel swerves back the other direction again. A pilot must attempt a Pilot check (DC 10) to pass through. Remember to apply the pod's Turning bonus.

If any action fails in the tunnel turn, the Podracer scrapes the tunnel wall, taking 1d6 points of damage and slowing down by one speed category.

11 NEEDLE'S EYE: After a short, straight section, the cliff walls close in leaving only a single-lane opening through which racers can leave the tunnel. To pass through the Needle's Eye, a pilot must make a Pilot check (DC 15). If he fails, his Podracer suffers 2d6 points of damage, and slows down two speed categories.

If both vehicles try to pass through the Needle's Eye on the same round, both pilots must roll Pilot checks. Whoever rolls higher attempts to go first, as the rules above. If he fails, the other pilot's difficulty to pass through the Eye increases to DC 25.

12 RAMP: Just beyond the Needle's Eye, the ground drops away sharply, forming a ramp. A pilot must make a Pilot check (DC 5) to land correctly. Add the Podracer's Traction bonus to this roll. If the roll fails, the Podracer suffers 1d4 points of damage.

13 DEBRIS FIELD: The road is straight, but cluttered with broken rocks laid bare by Tatooine's scouring windstorms. A pilot must succeed at a Pilot check (DC 5) to avoid hitting one of the large rocks. If the check fails, the pilot's Podracer slows by one speed category and suffers 2d4 points of damage.

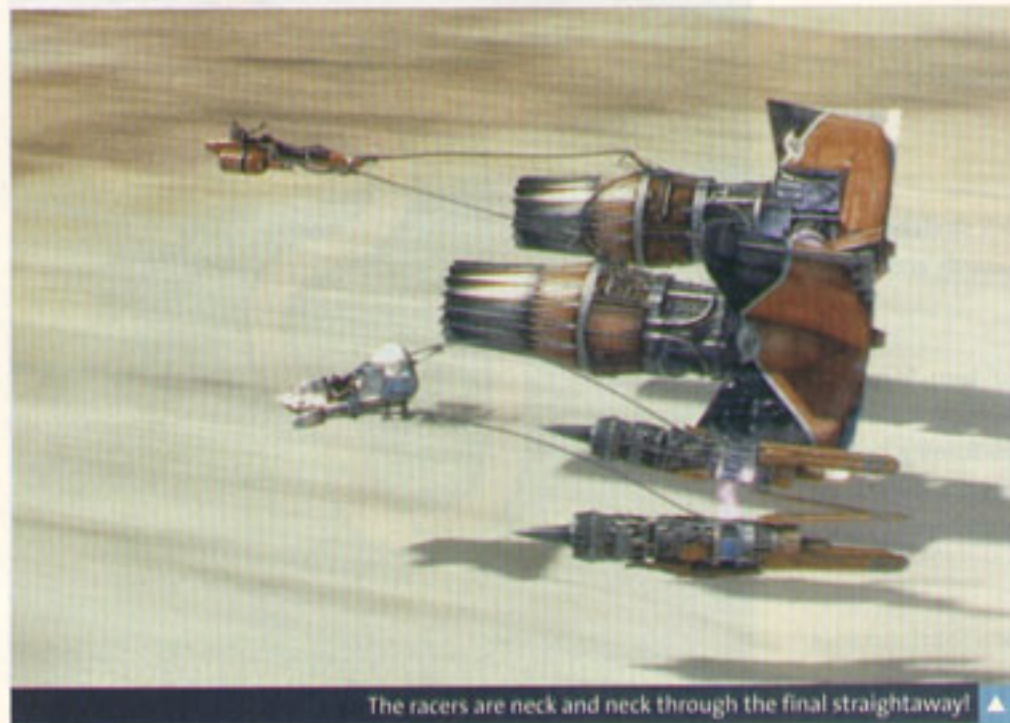
14 DEBRIS FIELD: The debris is much smaller for a short distance, but larger ones are hidden behind rises in the track. A pilot must attempt another Pilot check (DC 5) to avoid hitting one of these last few large boulders. If the check fails, the pilot's Podracer suffers 1d6 points of damage, but does not slow appreciably.

15 FINAL STRAIGHTAWAY: One last straight stretch waits before you pass the starting line. There are no hazards here. If this is only the first or second lap, the next stretch you encounter will be the first stretch again.

But if this is the third lap—you reached the finish line! If you're the first to successfully pass this straightaway on your third lap, you win the race!

Ready for More?

These rules recreate just one race. *Secrets of Tatooine*, a sourcebook for the **STAR WARS ROLEPLAYING GAME** from Wizards of the Coast, gives full rules for generating thousands of race courses and opponents, as well as buying newer and better parts for Podracers. You'll also find the Boonta Eve Classic race itself, so you can recreate the thrilling race scene from **STAR WARS: EPISODE 1 THE PHANTOM MENACE!**



The racers are neck and neck through the final straightaway!

PODRACING

SPEED



DAMAGE TRACK



SPECIAL RULE: ANAKIN

Anakin can use the Force once during the race to gain a +1d6 bonus to his checks.



	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
LAP 1															
LAP 2															
LAP 3															

MANEUVERS

ACCELERATE

1 Speed:	DC 10
2 Speeds:	DC 20
3 Speeds:	DC 30

DECELERATE

1 Speed:	DC 0
2 Speeds:	DC 5
3 Speeds:	DC 15

MAINTAIN SPEED

Low Speed:	DC 0
High Speed:	DC 5
Boost Speed:	DC 10

BUMP

Both racers make Pilot checks; lower check is off course

SEQUENCE

1. Roll Initiative
2. Move
3. Resolve Hazards
4. Action
5. Move
6. Resolve Hazards
7. Action

PILOT

ANAKIN SKYWALKER

Initiative:	+3
Pilot Skill:	+9
Repair Skill:	+3

PODRACER

MODIFIED RADON-ULZER 620C RACING ENGINES

Traction:	+2
Turning:	+1
Acceleration:	+1
Brake:	+0
Top Speed:	+4

PODRACING

SPEED



DAMAGE TRACK



SPECIAL RULE: SEBULBA

Sebulba can use his flame jets once during the race to inflict 10 points of damage to Anakin's Podracer, if it is in the same stretch.



	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
LAP 1															
LAP 2															
LAP 3															

MANEUVERS

ACCELERATE

1 Speed:	DC 10
2 Speeds:	DC 20
3 Speeds:	DC 30

DECELERATE

1 Speed:	DC 0
2 Speeds:	DC 5
3 Speeds:	DC 15

MAINTAIN SPEED

Low Speed:	DC 0
High Speed:	DC 5
Boost Speed:	DC 10

BUMP

Both racers make Pilot checks; lower check is off course

SEQUENCE

1. Roll Initiative
2. Move
3. Resolve Hazards
4. Action
5. Move
6. Resolve Hazards
7. Action

PILOT

SEBULBA

Initiative:	+3
Pilot Skill:	+8
Repair Skill:	+2

PODRACER

COLLAOR POND RAT PLUG-F MAMMOTH, SPLIT X

Traction:	+2
Turning:	+2
Acceleration:	+1
Brake:	+0
Top Speed:	+4





PERIL IN THE IONOSPHERE

BY STEVE MILLER

ILLUSTRATED BY STAN SHAW

IN PERIL IN THE IONOSPHERE, a routine shuttle trip becomes a struggle for survival as the pilot is disabled by poisonous gas and only the heroes can save themselves and the other passengers. The adventure uses the rules presented in the *STAR WARS Invasion of Theed Adventure Game* and is intended for the characters found there. Peril in the Ionosphere can be used as a bridge between the adventures from the *Adventure Game* and scenarios of your own creation.

STARTING THE SCENARIO

The adventure begins as the heroes are boarding the doomed shuttle. If you are using this adventure as part of an ongoing campaign begun with the adventures in the *Star Wars Invasion of Theed Adventure Game*, create a scene in which a Naboo official approaches the heroes with an offer to join the Naboo/Gungan effort to establish a colony on Naboo's water-rich moon. Possible incentives include:

- the Queen's gratitude;
- a monthly salary of 2,000 credits each;
- free room and board on the moonbase;
- a small Corellian freighter, the *Mystic Burn*. The freighter is at the base, and the heroes will be responsible for outfitting and supplying the freighter as needed. The ownership of the freighter will be in all the heroes' names initially. (See the Shipbuilding Secrets article in this issue for the *Mystic Burn's* description and deck plan.)

Once the heroes are ready to start the adventure, they go to the Civic Spaceport, Theed's public spaceport, located across the river from the Queen's palace. There they board a small Naboo shuttle. Read the following colored text aloud:

A starport official escorts you to a small shuttle waiting just outside the main starport terminal. A lanky Ithorian in a dark blue uniform stands at the bottom of the entry ramp. "Greetings," he says, shaking hands with each of you. His voice sounds friendly despite the odd stereophonic effect generated by the double-mouths of his species. "I am Captain Worlohp, and it's a pleasure to meet you. You're the final passengers to arrive, so after a few last-minute checks we'll be ready to go. Oh, I must ask you to surrender your weapons to me. I do not allow my passengers to

carry firearms or other implements of death on board my ship. I learned long ago that too many beings harbor animosity toward one another to let them be armed in such a confined area—particularly when traveling through the vacuum of space."

Worlohp will let Jedi keep their lightsabers. He insists on collecting blasters however, as he fears they might punch holes in the shuttle's hull or damage vital systems if fired, something he gladly explains to distrusting heroes. He further assures them that the storage locker with their weapons will be in full view the entire time and that their weapons will be returned to them as soon as shuttle sets down on the moon.

When the heroes have surrendered their blasters, Worlohp leads them up the access ramp and into the shuttle's passenger compartment.

PERIL IN THE IONOSPHERE

ABOARD THE SHUTTLE

Unfold the poster map of the Naboo shuttle and show it to the players at this time. Then read or paraphrase the following description:

The shuttle's passenger compartment is sparsely appointed, although the seats appear comfortable. Three other passengers are already here, and they nod in greeting as you enter. A young human male and female appear to be technicians based on their style of dress. The third is an older man in the formal robes of a biologist. You get the feeling that the two technicians are eager to engage you in conversation, but the older gentleman returns to reviewing a datapad after giving you the briefest acknowledgment.

"Make yourselves comfortable," Worlohp says as he goes to the back of the passenger cabin. He enters a code on a keypad, and a narrow storage compartment slides open. He places your weapons inside and then closes it. A soft electronic beep sounds as the lock engages. He then heads toward the front of the ship and into the cockpit. "We'll be underway in just a few moments," he says, closing the door behind him.

Use the poster map or the interior map included with this scenario to place the heroes and the supporting characters in their exact spots in the shuttle. Whether or not you use the map, take this opportunity to roleplay the other passengers. They are listed below.

KHARL VANNAB is a young Nabooian man who recently graduated from the Theed School of Technology and Engineering. He graduated at the top of his class and is excited to have received such an important post. He is to be a Third Grade Assistant Technician at the moon installation.

Friendly and talkative, Kharl's favorite

subjects relate to ship engines and environmental systems maintenance.

SAKME KELENE is a young Nabooian woman who was a member of the same Theed School of Technology and Engineering as Kharl. She graduated in the top 10 percent of the class. She and Kharl are long-time friends, so they both applied for a position at the new moon base together. She has also been hired as a Third Grade Assistant Technician.

She is as friendly and talkative as Kharl, and the two often trip over each other's sentences in their excitement. If the heroes have completed the adventures in the *Adventure Game*, Sakme is familiar with some of their exploits through a Palace Guard friend. She asks the heroes what it was like to fight battle droids. (She spent the invasion in one of the internment camps, although she proudly states that she managed to sabotage a STAP while the battle droids were preoccupied. If you want to tie her story to the heroes, she could say that her sabotage was made possible by the heroes' activities.)

PROFESSOR HALLEM CELAAR is an elderly Nabooian man who is greatly admired in academic circles for extensive studies of Naboo's plant life. He is going to the moon to head up a project investigating the feasibility of transplanting large numbers of Naboo plant and animal life-forms to the satellite's surface.

Professor Celaar (which is how he introduces himself and how he insists on being addressed) is not as outgoing as Kharl and Sakme. In fact, he intends to spend the journey to the moon reviewing datapads. He is never rude, but he tries to make it clear he doesn't want to be bothered by idle conversation.

As the roleplaying takes place, interject the following:

The shuttle's engines start to hum and shudder slightly as the ship lifts off. Captain Worlohp's odd but cheerful voice fills the passenger cabin. "We're underway, my friends. We should be landing at the moon base in 42 minutes. Just sit back and relax. If you want

to keep track of our progress, we'll be reaching the lower ionosphere in 16 minutes, and we'll clear of the planet completely in 19 minutes. We'll enter the moon's upper atmosphere in 35 minutes. Weather systems are clear on both bodies, and our flight path is clear of orbital debris from the space battle."

A ROUTINE TRIP? NEVER!

Seventeen minutes into the flight, the journey gets dangerous. Read or paraphrase the following at this time:

The shuttle lurches suddenly. A shower of sparks erupts from a conduit near the ceiling of the passenger compartment, and two gouts of gas start streaming from cracks in the paneling.

Give the heroes a moment to react as the other passengers begin to panic, then read or paraphrase the following:

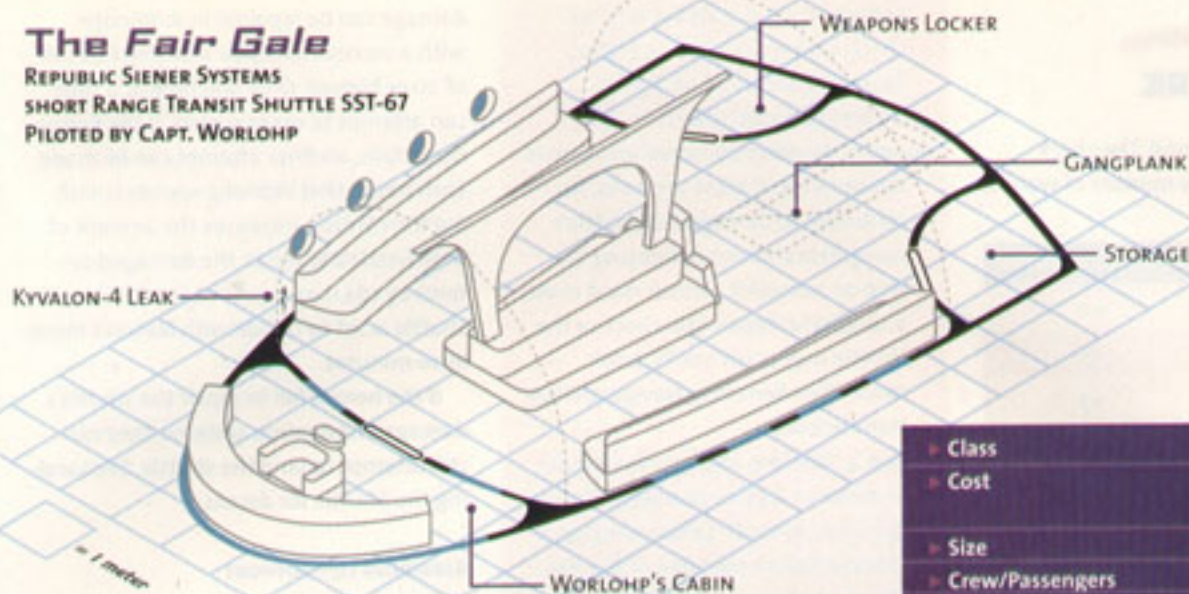
The cockpit door slides open and Worlohp comes rushing into the passenger cabin, an emergency tool kit in his hand. "Looks like I was wrong about the flight path being clear," he said. "We were just hit by some Trade Federation hull remnants. Not to worry—we have enough engineers on board that we should have the conduits fixed in no time! Oh, and don't worry. The gas is just Kyvalon-4, perfectly harmless to most sentients, including all humans and near-humans. We still need to fix it, though. If we lose too much pressure, we'll lose power to the repulsors."

Although Kharl and Sakme are both clearly rattled by this turn of events, they dig out their tool kits. If any hero points out that he or she has the Repair skill, Worlohp hands the hero his tool kit. The Ithorian states that things will be safer if he returns to the cockpit to monitor sensors and avoid collisions with additional debris.

However, as the Ithorian turns to go into the cockpit, the situation worsens. Allow any hero who has the Gather Information or Survival skill to make a skill check. Any hero who gets a check result of 15 or higher remembers that Ithorians exposed

The Fair Gale

REPUBLIC SIENER SYSTEMS
SHORT RANGE TRANSIT SHUTTLE SST-67
PILOTED BY CAPT. WORLOHP



REPUBLIC SIENER SYSTEMS SHORT RANGE TRANSIT SHUTTLE SST-67

Republic Siener Systems contracted with the Naboo government and other lightly inhabited planetary systems to provide them with inexpensive and efficient intra-system shuttles.

The SST-67 is unarmed with minimal armor. Its systems are easily accessible from both inside and outside the shuttle, making maintenance quick and relatively painless. Its controls and sensor suites are recycled from a failed freighter design, but they are well-suited for the SST models of ships as they are easily mastered. The stock models come with computers and communications arrays that are easily upgraded to allow full automation of the shuttles.

► Class	Transport
► Cost	82,000 (new), 20,000 (used)
► Size	Small (23.2m)
► Crew/Passengers	1 (normal +2)/18
► Cargo Capacity	1 metric ton
► Consumables	2 Days
► Hyperdrive	None
► Maximum Speed	Cruising
► Defense	16 (+1 size, +5 armor)
► Shield Points	None
► Hull Points	120
► DR	10
► Weapons	None

to Kyvalon-4 temporarily become homicidal maniacs. This realization gives the hero a chance to act as Worlohp flies into a rage and attacks:

Worlohp turns to go back into the cockpit but then hesitates. Professor Celaar rises from his seat, exclaiming, "By the stars! Did you say Kyvalon-4?" The Ithorian whirls back to face you, his large eyes now filled with fury. He roars savagely and strikes the startled Sakme. Her head slams against the wall with a sickening thud and she drops to the floor, unconscious. Worlohp then charges at Khari who stands frozen with shock and horror. "The gas has driven him mad!" Celaar cries, barely audible over the Ithorian's savage bellowing.

Worlohp and any hero who successfully anticipated his rampage should compare Initiatives to see who acts first.

Worlohp attacks with his fists, once per round. Normally he deals 1d3 points of

damage, but his homicidal state heightens his strength, allowing him to deal 1d3+2 points per attack. For purposes of this battle, Worlohp fells Sakme, Khari, and Celaar with a single blow when he hits one of them. You should still roll the dice and conceal the result for the sake of drama.

The heroes have several choices at this point:

- One or more of them can move to engage Worlohp in melee. Use the map of the shuttle to determine the exact locations of the heroes and supporting characters. (You might want to use STAR WARS action figures to represent the various heroes and characters.)
- A hero with the Disable Device skill can attempt to unlock the storage compartment containing the heroes' weapons. This action takes 1d4 rounds, but only one skill check is needed. If the hero gets a check result of 15 or higher, the attempt succeeds. If the attempt fails, a hero can try again, spending another 1d4 rounds. Once the heroes have their weapons, they can open fire on

Worlohp. (See below for how to handle shots that miss.)

- One or more heroes with the Repair skill can attempt to stop the gas leaks. See Repairing the Gas Leaks section below. One hero must spend 1d6 rounds making the repairs, then get a result of 15 or higher on the skill check to successfully stop the leak. There are two leaks. Two heroes can work together to halve the repair time (1d3 rounds). Each person must make a Repair skill check and roll 15 or higher. If one or both heroes fail this check, no more repair attempts can be made. (See below for how to handle the scenario if the heroes do not fix the leaks.)
- Provide medical aid to injured heroes or characters. The injured person must be at least 2 spaces from Worlohp before treatment can be administered, since it's too dangerous to attempt healing amid combat. A medpac is situated under each shuttle seat. Healing injured heroes and characters requires a successful Treat Injury skill check. Using the

PERIL IN THE IONOSPHERE

medpac requires 1 round. The check result determines the number of wound points recovered:

SKILL CHECK	WOUND POINTS
1-4	+0
5-9	+1
10-14	+2
15-19	+3
20-24	+4
25+	+5

Worlohp's and other characters' actions for the next few rounds are as follows:

Round 1: Worlohp attacks Kharl or any hero who moves to engage him in melee. Professor Celaar flees to the back of the cabin, urging any hero who engages Worlohp to "Just subdue him! He's not in control of his actions!"

Round 2: Worlohp lets out a wild cry and turns to run into the cockpit. He begins to smash the control panels. (See Repairing Navigation Systems below.) For the rest of the battle, Sakme and Kharl do nothing unless the heroes persuade them otherwise. Celaar begins to act in round 4, but can be persuaded to do other things. Ordering Sakme, Kharl, or Celaar to perform courageous

actions requires a Diplomacy skill check; on a result of 10 or higher, Sakme, Kharl, or Celaar (hero's choice) do as instructed.

Round 3: Worlohp pummels any hero in melee range. If there are none, he continues to damage the shuttle's navigational controls, freezing the ship on autopilot. Heroes must make a successful Repair skill check or the shuttle may crash into Naboo's moon. (See Repairing Navigation Systems below.)

Round 4: Worlohp engages the heroes in melee or further damages the navigational controls. Celaar retrieves a medpac from under one of the passenger seats and uses it to treat anyone who appears hurt. (He has the Treat Injury skill.)

Round 5: Worlohp engages the heroes in melee or damages the shuttle's life support systems. Life support will fail in 20 rounds (2 minutes). (See Repairing Life Support below.) Kharl or Sakme offers to assist with repairs if the heroes seem to have their hands full. Celaar continues to treat injuries.

Round 6: Worlohp returns his attention to the passenger cabin and attacks Celaar.

Round 7+: Worlohp attacks the heroes until he or they are defeated.

REPAIRING NAVIGATION SYSTEMS

In his rage, Worlohp tries to smash the shuttle's navigational controls. The initial

damage can be repaired in 10 minutes with a successful Repair skill check (result of 20 or higher). Only one hero at a time can attempt to make repairs. If the Repair check fails, another attempt can be made. Each round that Worlohp spends smashing the controls increases the amount of time needed to repair the damaged systems by 1d4 minutes. Time is critical, as the shuttle is set to collide with Naboo's moon in 26 minutes.

If the heroes fail to repair the shuttle's damaged navigation systems, they can still attempt to land the shuttle. See Landing the Shuttle for details.

REPAIRING LIFE SUPPORT

If Worlohp knocks out the shuttle's life support system, the heroes must restore it before the oxygen supply is depleted.

Repairs to life support take 1d6 rounds. At the end of that time, a successful Repair check (result of 10 or higher) is required. Only one person can attempt to repair the life support system at a time. If the Repair check succeeds, life support is restored. If the Repair check fails, another attempt can be made.

If no one repairs the life support system, everyone aboard begins to suffocate after 20 rounds (2 minutes). A hero can hold her breath for a number of rounds equal to her Constitution score. Supporting characters (including Worlohp) can hold their breaths for 10 rounds.

After that, characters must succeed at a Fortitude save (10 or higher) or fall uncon-



scious, dying the following round. A new save is required each round, and the difficulty increases by 1 each time (11 on the second round, 12 on the third, and so on).

There are no breath masks aboard the shuttle. However, the heroes might have their own breath masks, allowing them to survive without life support for as long as it takes the shuttle to land.

REPAIRING THE KYVALON-4 LEAKS

It takes 1d6 minutes to stop a gas leak, and there are two such leaks.

A hero who spends 1d6 minutes repairing the gas leak can make a Repair skill check; a result of 15 or higher on the skill check is required. Two heroes can work together to halve the repair time (1d3 rounds). Each person must make a Repair skill check and get 15 or higher. If one hero fails this check, the repair time is not halved.

If the Kyvalon-4 leaks aren't fixed within 15 minutes, the shuttle's repulso lifts fail. All Pilot skill checks suffer a -4 penalty. (See Landing the Shuttle for details.)

BLASTER SHOTS THAT MISS

If the heroes get their blaster weapons from the storage compartment, they can shoot Worlohp rather than attack him. Hitting the rampaging Worlohp requires a successful attack roll.

If a hero misses with a blaster, use the map to trace the path of the shot. If another character is in the line of fire, have the hero make a second attack roll to see whether the shot strikes him or her. If the shot does not hit anyone, it strikes the hull instead.

If a hero shoots one of the shuttle's walls with a blaster and the blaster is not set on stun, have the player roll damage normally. If the damage exceeds 10 points, the shot punches a hole in the shuttle's hull. The vessel starts losing atmosphere. Failing to patch the hole in 1 minute (10 rounds) depletes the shuttle's air supply. (See the Repairing Life Support section above for suffocation rules.) Patching the hole takes 2 rounds and a successful Repair skill check (a result of 10 or higher). Failed checks can be attempted again.

If a missed shot goes into the cockpit,

the GM should roll 1d6 to see what systems are damaged:

1d6 ROLL	RESULT
1-2:	The navigational controls were struck, resulting in an effect like the one described in the "Repairing Navigation Systems" section above.
3-4:	The life support controls are struck, resulting in a situation like the one described in the "Repairing Life Support" section above.
5-6:	The shot strikes a wall, possibly causing damage as described above. If the blaster is set on stun, no ill effects occur.

LANDING THE SHUTTLE

Even if the heroes are unable to repair the shuttle's damaged navigation systems or the Kyvalon-4 gas leaks, they can still attempt to land the damaged shuttle.

Landing the shuttle requires a successful Pilot skill check. The following penalties apply to the skill check:

- » -4 penalty if the navigational systems are damaged;
- » -4 penalty if the Kyvalon-4 gas leaks have caused the repulso lifts to fail.

If the pilot returns to Naboo, automatic tractor beam guidance systems grant a +3 bonus to the Pilot skill check. If the pilot tries to land on the moon, he must rely completely on his own skill.

The pilot has one chance to land the shuttle safely. Apply any modifiers to the pilot's skill check, then compare the roll with the results below:

SKILL CHECK	RESULT
0-9:	The shuttle crashes and explodes, killing all aboard.
10-14:	The shuttle crashes and sustains considerable hull damage, but does not explode. Everyone aboard takes 2d6+2 points of damage.
15-19:	The shuttle crashes but does not break apart or explode. Everyone aboard takes 1d6+1 points of damage.
20+:	The shuttle lands safely. No one is hurt, but the shuttle requires extensive repairs before it can be relaunched.

ENDING THE SCENARIO

Assuming the heroes did not kill him, Worlohp makes a full recovery. The Ithorian is terribly embarrassed and apologizes to his passengers. He also offers his friendship out of gratitude. If they survived, Sakme and Kharl are similarly grateful to the heroes, offering to perform free upgrades and repairs on their freighter (assuming they have one). Before leaving the heroes' company, Celaar offers his sincere thanks, admitting that the harrowing experience has forever altered his opinion of space travel for the worse.

Feel free to use this short scenario as the springboard for a larger adventure. Maybe the shuttle was not struck by debris but was instead struck by a remote controlled missile constructed to make the collision look as if it were an accident. Once the truth becomes known, Queen Amidala orders a detailed investigation to determine the missile's origin. This could raise several questions: Why did someone want to bring down the shuttle? Were they targeting one or more of the passengers, or were they attempting to damage the colonization effort in general? Is there another threat to Naboo? The answers to this mystery are up to you!

WORLOHP, ITHORIAN SOLDIER

Level: 2

Initiative: 10

Vitality Points: 16

Wound Points: 10

Speed: 5 spaces

Defense: 14

Melee Attack: 1d20+1 (fists)

Melee Damage: 1d3 (fists)

Saves: Fortitude 1d20+2, Reflex 1d20+2,

Will 1d20+1

Skills: Computer Use (1d20+4), Pilot (1d20+6), Repair (1d20+4), Spot (1d20+4), Survival (1d20+2).

Note: When exposed to Kyvalon-4 gas, Worlohp flies into an uncontrolled, homicidal rage. During his rage, the following stats change:

» Defense: 12

» Melee Attack: 1d20+3 (fists)

» Melee Damage: 1d3+2 (fists)

» Saves: Fortitude 1d20+4, Reflex 1d20+2, Will 1d20+3

PERIL IN THE IONOSPHERE

CAPT. WORLOHP



KHARL VENNEB



SAKME KELENE



PROF. CELAAR



KHARL VENNEB AND SAKME KELENE, HUMAN SCOUTS
 Level: 1
 Initiative: 12
 Vitality Points: 0
 Wound Points: 9
 Speed: 5 spaces
 Defense: 13
 Melee Attack: 1d20 (fists)
 Melee Damage: 1d3 (fists)
 Saves: Fortitude 1d20+1, Reflex 1d20+1, Will 1d20+0
 Skills: Disable Device (1d20+4), Pilot (1d20+4), Repair (1d20+4), Search (1d20+4), Survival (1d20+4).

PROFESSOR HALLEM CELAAR, HUMAN SCOUT
 Level: 2
 Initiative: 12
 Vitality Points: 0
 Wound Points: 9
 Speed: 5 spaces
 Defense: 14
 Melee Attack: 1d20+1 (fists)
 Melee Damage: 1d3 (fists)
 Saves: Fortitude 1d20+2, Reflex 1d20+2, Will 1d20+1
 General Skills: Computer Use (1d20+6), Disable Device (1d20+4), Search (1d20+4), Spot (1d20+4), Survival (1d20+6).

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Although *Peril in the Ionosphere* is designed for the simplified game rules appearing in the *STAR WARS Invasion of Theed Adventure Game*, the adventure can be easily adapted for the *STAR WARS ROLEPLAYING GAME*. If you plan to run this adventure using the *STAR WARS ROLEPLAYING GAME* d20 System rules, use the following statistics for Captain Worlohp and the other supporting characters.

CAPTAIN WORLOHP, MALE ITHORIAN SLD 4:
 Init +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Defense 14 (+1 Dex, +3 class); Spd 10 m; VP/WP 30/12; Atk +4 melee (1d3, punch), +5 ranged; SA homicidal rage; SV Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +3; SZ M; FP 1; Rep 1; Str 11, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 14.
 Equipment: Flight suit.

SA—Homicidal Rage: When exposed to Kyvalon-4 gas, Worlohp flies into an uncontrolled, homicidal rage. During his rage, Worlohp gains +4 Strength and +4 Constitution, receives a +2 morale bonus to Will saves, and suffers a -2 penalty to Defense. The rage lasts until Worlohp is rendered unconscious or slain.

Skills: Astrogate +7, Computer Use +7,

Knowledge (nature) +4, Pilot +10, Read/Write (Basic, Ithorese), Repair +10, Speak (Basic, Ithorese), Spot +2, Survival +5.

Feats: Armor Proficiency (light, medium, heavy), Improved Initiative, Point Blank Shot, Skill Emphasis (Pilot, Repair), Weapon Group Proficiency (blaster pistols, blaster rifles, heavy weapons, simple weapons, vibro weapons).

KHARL VANNÉB, MALE HUMAN EXP 4:
 Init +1 (+1 Dex); Defense 12 (+1 Dex, +1 class); Spd 10 m; VP/WP -/9; Atk +3 melee (1d3, punch), +4 ranged; SV Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +4; SZ M; FP 0; Rep 1; Str 11, Dex 12, Con 9, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 9.
 Equipment: Diagnostic tools, repair kit.
 Skills: Computer Use +10, Craft (electronics) +8, Craft (engines) +8, Disable Device +6, Knowledge (engineering) +6, Pilot +4, Profession (technician) +4, Read/Write (basic), Repair +13, Speak (Basic).

Feats: Gearhead, Skill Emphasis (Knowledge: engineering, Repair).

SAKME KELENE, FEMALE HUMAN EXP 4:
 Init +1 (+1 Dex); Defense 12 (+1 Dex, +1 class); Spd 10 m; VP/WP -/9; Atk +3 melee

(1d3, punch), +4 ranged; SV Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +4; SZ M; FP 0; Rep 1; Str 10, Dex 12, Con 9, Int 15, Wis 11, Cha 11.

Equipment: Diagnostic tools, repair kit.
Skills: Computer Use +10, Craft (electronics) +8, Craft (engines) +8, Disable Device +7, Knowledge (alien species) +3, Pilot +3, Profession (technician) +6, Read/Write (Basic), Repair +12, Speak (Basic).

Feats: Gearhead, Skill Emphasis (Profession: technician, Repair).

PROFESSOR HALLEM CELAAR, MALE HUMAN EXP 8:
 Init +1 (+1 Dex); Defense 13 (+1 Dex, +2 class); Spd 10 m; VP/WP -/9; Atk +5/+0 melee (1d3-1, punch), +7/+2 ranged; SV Fort +1, Ref +3, Will +6; SZ M; FP 0; Rep 2; Str 9, Dex 12, Con 9, Int 15, Wis 10, Cha 8.
 Equipment: Multiple datapads.
Skills: Computer Use +14, Knowledge (alien species) +12, Knowledge (life sciences) +15, Knowledge (Naboo system) +10, Disable Device +11, Pilot +6, Profession (biologist) +13, Read/Write (Basic), Repair +6, Speak (Basic), Treat Injury +7.
Feats: Gearhead, Skill Emphasis (Knowledge: life sciences, Knowledge: Naboo system, Profession: biologist).

Rendezvous at Ord Mantell

RENDEZVOUS AT ORD MANTELL IS A MEDIUM LENGTH ADVENTURE FOR FOUR 1ST- OR 2ND-LEVEL HEROES. IT CAN SERVE AS THE LAUNCHING POINT FOR A REBELLION ERA CAMPAIGN, OR AS PART OF YOUR ONGOING REBELLION ERA GAME.



In this adventure, the group of heroes ideally have a range of skills and aptitudes, from combat prowess to stealth to diplomacy. A scout or fringer would be useful, as most of the adventure takes place in the wild backcountry of Ord Mantell.

Adjusting the Adventure

Though the adventure is designed for four low-level heroes, it's easy enough to adjust it for different power levels.

If you have fewer than four heroes, you can make Renci Tosh a more active participant in combat. With more than four heroes, or if the average hero level is above 2, bump up the power level of

the opponents slightly. For instance, you can add one or two thugs to the first encounter, or increase the bounty hunter to 3rd level. Don't go overboard, though. The heroes should be able to get through the adventure without much "down time" required for resting.

Getting Started

By the beginning of this adventure, the heroes should be acquainted with one another. Maybe some of them grew up together (either on Ord Mantell or elsewhere), or perhaps they served on a starship together. For the purposes of this adventure,



BY ANDY COLLINS
ILLUSTRATED BY DAN VEESENMEYER

Why Are The Heroes On Ord Mantell?

Particularly if this adventure forms the starting point for your campaign, you might want to determine why the heroes are present on Ord Mantell. Here are a few ideas:

FRINGERS: Natives of Ord Mantell—especially those who hail from the wilder areas of the planet, often fall into this class. Alternatively, the fringer hero might have come to Ord Mantell from an even more backwater world in search of civilization.

NOBLES: Any world needs administrators and ambassadors, and though most legitimate nobles steer clear of worlds like Ord Mantell, those interested or involved in illegitimate activity flock to the planet.

SCOUNDRELS: Ord Mantell draws lawless characters of every type, from gamblers to pirates to petty thieves. The hero may be a native, but more likely is a visitor to the planet.

SCOUTS: Pilots use Ord Mantell as a mid-point of journeys through the stars. Hunters and explorers come to the planet to investigate its wilderness.

SOLDIERS: Spacehands, bodyguards, mercenaries, and former soldiers all frequent Ord Mantell.

FORCE ADEPTS: As a wild, unexplored area, Ord Mantell makes a fine location for unusual or unique Force-wielding characters. Its rocky backcountry might even be home to a secret enclave of Force adepts.

JEDI CONSULARS OR GUARDIANS: Jedi of any stripe are rare enough during the Rebellion Era to be unique visitors to Ord Mantell. They might come here seeking rumors of others like them, or while on the run from Imperial forces or assassins.

the reason isn't important. If you want, you can even run a "pre-adventure" adventure in which the heroes meet each other for the first time.

The adventure opens with the heroes gathered together in a local spacer bar in the frontier settlement of Great Rock, on the rough-and-tumble world of Ord Mantell. Maybe they're looking for work, for transport off-world, or just for trouble.

GM Background

Renci Tosh is a Rebel spy and recruiting agent. Unfortunately, she suffered mechanical problems on her most recent trip and was forced to crash-land on Ord Mantell not far from Great Rock. As Tosh stumbled toward town, she was intercepted and imprisoned by a group of thugs working for a local crimelord. Despite her injuries, Tosh escaped

her crude cell and fled into the streets.

At the same time, a group of raiders investigating the crash site hauled away Tosh's crippled starfighter to sell for scrap.

The adventure opens as Tosh encounters the heroes in a spacer bar. She needs their help to get her out of town and to recover (and repair) her ship.

A Fateful Meeting

You're gathered together in Qexi's, an absolute dive of a bar filled with the dregs of the galaxy. Most of the customers are human, though a number of Rodians, Sullustans, Bothans, and even a pair of Trandoshans are present as well.

Your peaceful afternoon is interrupted by a woman sliding into an open seat at your table. You didn't see her come in, and she isn't dressed like a local—in fact, her clothes look pretty expensive, though they're spotted with mud and torn in several places. You also notice some recent bruises and scrapes on her arms.

Before you can open your mouths, she puts a finger to her lips and glances furtively across the room. Then she turns back to you and says in a low voice, "Interested in helping out a girl in trouble?"

Assuming the heroes are interested, Renci Tosh continues:

"I'm a visitor to this world, and I seem to have fallen afoul of the local crime element. I could use some help getting back to my ship. I can't pay you anything now—I have no credits on me—but I can promise a reward of 500 credits apiece as soon as I get to my ship.

"If you're interested, we need to get started right away. Can you help me?"

Renci claims to be an explorer who experienced mechanical difficulties before crash-landing her Z-95 Headhunter in the wilderness a couple dozen kilometers from town. She says it'll take at least a couple of days to get there. If the heroes try to negotiate with Renci, a successful Diplomacy check (DC 15) gets her to raise her reward to 750 credits each (she's desperate), but she won't go any higher.

Interrupted!

Just as the heroes complete the deal with Renci, a pair of goons wearing crude uniforms burst through the door into the bar and start looking around. Neither Renci nor the heroes are surprised; however, roll Spot checks for the thugs to see Renci (DC 11). If either thug fails, he is surprised and



Renci Tosh, Female Human Sct 2: Init +2 (Dex); Defense 16 (+2 Dex, +4 class); Spd 10m; VP/WP 9/10 (currently 4/8); Atk +0 melee (1d3+1, punch), +3 ranged; SQ Trailblazing; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +4; SZ M; FP 1; Rep 1; Str 8, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 12.

Equipment: none.

Skills: Astrogate +6, Bluff +3, Climb +4, Hide +7, Listen +4, Pilot +7, Read/Write Language (Basic, Rodian), Search +6, Speak Language (Basic, Rodian), Spot +4, Survival +7, Swim +4.

Feats: Alertness, Starship Operation (starfighter), Track, Weapon Group Proficiency (blaster pistols, blaster rifles, simple weapons).

What If They Don't Take The Bait?

An ever-present threat to adventures such as this one—where you, the GM, present a "hook" designed to lead the heroes into the adventure—is the possibility that the heroes simply choose not to involve themselves in your plot. Eventually, you'll be able to judge what types of missions best suit your heroes (and your players), but until that point (and even sometimes after it), sometimes heroes just don't "take the bait." For instance, what if the heroes turn down Renci's plea for help?

In such a case, you have three basic options. The first is to force the players to involve their heroes despite their lack of interest. This is probably the worst choice, as it breaks the suspension of disbelief between the players and their heroes. If the players feel browbeaten

into going on specific missions, the game just becomes the GM telling the players what to do.

The second option is to accept their decision and let them veer from your carefully crafted mission into other adventures. This is OK, and sometimes it's inevitable, but if you do this too often, you risk wasting many hours creating plots, settings, and characters that never get used.

The third option, while the most difficult, can often be the most rewarding. This boils down to keeping your heroes involved in the adventure without them feeling railroaded along a storyline. In the case of this adventure, there are a few options to keep the heroes involved:

• The same local crimelord who captured Renci targets the heroes. This might require the heroes to get Renci's help.

- The heroes keep running into the same thugs and choose to leave town to maintain a low profile.
- The bounty hunter Gida Luroon learns of the heroes' contact with Renci and decides to include them in her hunt.
- An Imperial informant recognizes Renci as a Rebel and believes that the heroes are also Rebels.

Don't get too heavy-handed with this option. For instance, a bad way to manipulate the heroes would be to send a group of 20 thugs after them so they had no choice but to flee town. Always give heroes a choice of options, or at least the appearance of choice. Even if it doesn't matter what they do (and that should only rarely be true), the players should always believe firmly that their heroes' actions control the outcome of the story.

can't act in the surprise round. (If no one is surprised, roll initiative and move directly into the first round.) If the heroes don't attack, the thugs rudely look for Renci until they find her, whether by spotting her or interrogating bar patrons. When they find her, they attempt to drag her away. If the heroes try to stop them, they open fire.

Goons (2), Male Human Thg 1: Init +5 (Dex, Improved Initiative), Defense 11 (+1 Dex); Spd 10m; WP 6; Atk +1 melee (1d6, punch), +2 ranged (3d6, blaster pistol); SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +0; SZ M; FP 0; Rep 0; Str 11, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 8.
Equipment: blaster pistol.
Skills: Intimidate +3, Spot +2.
Feats: Armor Proficiency (light), Improved Initiative, Martial Artist, Weapon Proficiency (blaster pistols, simple weapons).

Renci doesn't have a weapon and is injured, so she takes cover and tries to hide

during the fight. If things go badly for the heroes, she tries to grab a weapon from a fallen character and defend herself.

The rest of the bar's occupants avoid the fight. Assuming the heroes win, Renci insists that they get out of town as quickly as possible.

Into the Wilderness

The heroes can linger in town if they want (or if they need to pick up supplies), though Renci reminds them constantly that they need to leave soon. If they remain in town too long, another group of thugs or the bounty hunter Gida Luroon (see below) comes to find them.

Once the heroes are safely out of town, they must backtrack Renci Tosh's original trail through a maze of rocky canyons. She can find the starting point—where the patrol captured her a few hundred meters outside town—but the heroes must follow her tracks back to her ship using the Track feat along with Survival skill checks.

The base DC is 15 (firm ground), +2 for the two days that have passed since she made the trail, for a total DC of 17. If no hero has the Track feat, Renci offers to do the tracking. She can take 10 and successfully follow her tracks.

The crash site is 20 kilometers away. Since the tracking character must move at half rate to follow the tracks (or suffer a -5 penalty), and the rocky terrain limits movement to one-half normal, the heroes move at only one-fourth their normal speed. This means that if the slowest hero's speed is 10m, they can cover 1 1/4 km per hour (or about 10 km for eight hours of travel each day). If the slowest hero's speed is 6m or 4m, they can cover only 6 or 4 kilometers each day, respectively. Thus, the trip requires 16, 27, or 40 hours (assuming they encounter no other delays) of walking, plus one or more nights spent under the twin moons of Ord Mantell.

Every hour of travel or rest, roll d% on the table below to see if the heroes encounter

d% ROLL	ENCOUNTER
01–50	None. The heroes don't see or hear anything unusual during this hour in the wild.
51–60	Hazardous Terrain. The heroes encounter a patch of dangerous terrain, such as quicksand, a thicket of poisonous shrubbery, or an unstable hillside. If one of the heroes is specifically looking out for such dangers, a successful Survival skill check (DC 15) allows them to avoid it. Otherwise, they will encounter the hazard. Adjudicate the danger as appropriate, calling for ability checks (such as a Dexterity check of DC 15 to avoid falling 4d4 meters down an unstable hillside), skill checks (such as a Swim check of DC 15 to remain afloat in quicksand) or saving throws (such as a Fortitude saving throw of DC 12 to avoid losing 1 point of Dexterity from poisonous thorns) as needed. (If the heroes aren't moving this hour, treat as no encounter.)
61–63	Teerik, Savrip Hunter. This local hunter is following the trail of a Mantellian savrip, a deadly predator unique to this world. Teerik hides on a ledge until he determines the heroes' intent (a Spot check of 18 or

better allows a hero to notice him). He's not interested in fighting the heroes and flees if attacked. His initial attitude is one of indifference, though if approached peacefully (and if the heroes shift his attitude to Friendly or better with a Diplomacy check or similar action), he gladly tells them what he's doing here and warns them about encountering savrips in the jungle. "Don't let them grab hold of you, or you're done for," Teerik warns. He'll even share some of his food if his attitude is changed to Helpful.

64–67 Gida Luroon, Bounty Hunter.

Gida Luroon was just about to leave Ord Mantell when she intercepted a transmission regarding Renci Tosh's escape. Hoping to make a few credits, Luroon decided to track her down and cash in on the (admittedly small) reward put up for her. She has no idea of Renci Tosh's Rebel connections. She attempts to sneak up on the heroes from behind. Allow each hero a Listen check (DC 20) to hear her from about 12 meters away. If the heroes fail, they can't act during the surprise round (during which Gida fires on Renci Tosh with her heavy blaster pistol set on stun). She only needs to capture Renci

Tosh, but she gladly takes any heroes she can get, figuring that she can get a decent price for capturing those who are "aiding and abetting" the prisoner's escape.

68–70 Mantellian Savrip. This fearsome beast is hungry and looking for a meal, particularly one that walks on two legs. Allow each side Listen checks (DC 15) to hear each other. Anyone who fails the check can't act during the surprise round. If the savrip fails its check and the heroes remain quiet and hidden, it may pass them by. Compare the result of the savrip's Spot check to the heroes' Hide checks; if the savrip's check is less than the worst Hide check, it doesn't notice them. See the "Mantellian Savrip" sidebar for information on this creature.

71–90 Wilderness Noises.

Have each hero make a Listen check (DC 15). Those who succeed hear noises (animals chirping, rocks tumbling, a bird crying overhead, or whatever else you want to include). These don't represent a threat, but they serve to keep the heroes on their toes (or encourage them to let their guard down after a few false alarms).



TEERIK

Teerik, Male Rodian Frg 1: Init +2 (Dex); Defense 15 (+2 Dex, +3 class); Spd 10m; VP/WP 10/14; Atk +1 melee (2d4+1, vibrodagger), +2 ranged (3d6, sporting blaster rifle); SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +1; SZ M; FP 1, Rep 0; Str 12, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 8.

Equipment: Sporting blaster rifle, vibrodagger, camouflage gear (+2 to Hide checks in rocky terrain), 6 days of food, canteen of water.

Skills: Climb +5, Hide +6 (+8), Listen +7, Knowledge (Ord Mantell system) +4, Search +2, Spot +7, Survival +5.

Feats: Track, Weapon Group Proficiency (blaster pistols, blaster rifles, simple weapons, vibro weapons).



GIDA LUROON

Gida Luroon, Female Twi'lek Sct 2: Init +2 (Dex); Defense 16 (+2 Dex, +4 class); Spd 10m; VP/WP 14/12; Atk +0 melee (1d4-1, knife), +3 ranged (3d8 or 1d8 plus stun [DC 18], heavy blaster pistol); SQ low-light vision, Trailblazing; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +3; SZ M; FP 1, Rep 0; Str 8, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 12.

Equipment: Heavy blaster pistol, knife, all-temperature cloak, 3 days of food.

Skills: Climb +4, Gather Information +3, Hide +7, Listen +6, Move Silently +7, Read/Write Language (Basic, Ryl), Spot +6, Speak Language (Basic, Lekku, Rodian, Ryl), Survival +6.

Feats: Point Blank Shot, Track, Weapon Group Proficiency (blaster pistols, blaster rifles, simple weapons).

anything while traveling through the canyons (add +10 to the roll at night). After any encounter in which the heroes take their attention away from the tracks, they must relocate the trail with another Survival check (DC 17); Renci Tosh can do this automatically by taking 10.

Along the way, Renci Tosh tries to feel out the heroes' attitudes toward the Empire and the Rebellion. She tries not to reveal her leanings, though a successful Sense Motive check (DC 18) may indicate that her queries are more than mere conversation.

The Crash Site

Renci Tosh crashed her starship right at the edge of the canyon maze, where the cliff walls give way to a rocky area of badlands. When the heroes finally locate the crash site, they discover that Renci's ship is nowhere to be found. Read the following text to the players:

You've followed the trail up to the very edge of the canyon maze. Beyond the cliff walls stretches a rocky landscape, dotted with mesas and ravines. Scorched earth and a small impact crater verify that your new friend's ship crashed here, but there is no vehicle to be found. Renci Tosh turns to you with a puzzled look on her face. "Uhhh... would you believe it was here when I last saw it?"

A Search or Survival skill check (DC 10) discovers drag marks leading away from the site (and into the badlands), accompanied by two huge sets of animal tracks (bantha tracks, which can be identified with a Survival check of 15 or better).

If the Survival check made to find tracks is 20 or better, the searcher also finds four distinct sets of booted humanoid tracks (a Search check can't find these). These are the tracks of the raiders who found Tosh's craft and dragged it back to their lair with banthas.

From here, the heroes must follow the trail (DC 10) to the raiders' lair. Because of the low DC, the heroes can move at full normal speed while following the tracks, though the rocky terrain reduces this to 3/4 normal (3.75 kph, 2.25 kph, or 1.5 kph for speeds of 10m, 6m, or 4m). Luckily, the lair is only 10 kilometers away.

New Creature: Mantellian Savrip

The Mantellian savrip is a large bipedal predator native to Ord Mantell. Savrips roam the rocky badlands of the planet preying on rodents, lizards, and other small creatures, though they will attack anything up to about two meters in size. Their favored attack is to grapple prey and crush it in their powerful, clawed hands.

Mantellian Savrip: Desert predator 4; Init +5 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Defense 15 (+1 Dex, -1 size, +5 natural armor); Spd 10m; VP/WP 34/19; Atk +9 melee (1d6+5, 2 claws) and +4 melee (1d8+5, bite), +5 ranged; SA improved grab; SQ low-light vision; SV Fort +8, Ref +2, Will +2; SZ L; Str 20, Dex 12, Con 19,

Int 4, Wis 13, Cha 8.

Skills: Climb +9, Hide +5, Listen +5, Spot +5, Survival +5.

Feats: Improved Initiative, Power Attack. Challenge Code: C

Special Attacks: Improved Grab—if the savrip hits a creature up to Medium-size with a claw, it attempts to start a grapple as a free action. No initial touch attack is required, and Tiny and Small creatures don't suffer a special size penalty. A successful hold deals no additional damage, but the savrip pulls its opponent into its space and automatically deals claw damage each round without an attack roll. See the grappling rules in Chapter 8: Combat of the *Star Wars Roleplaying Game* for more information.

If the heroes haven't yet encountered the bounty hunter Gida Luroon, the Twi'lek attacks while they search the site.

The Sunken Mesa

Like most planets with extensive wilderness areas, Ord Mantell has its share of fringe-dwelling raiders who prey on those who wander too far from civilization. A small band of these raiders lives inside a collapsed mesa.

The mesa itself is 20 meters high, but the entire center of the plateau collapsed long ago, forming a stable "floor" within the mesa's wall. The inner area of the mesa is about 10 meters above the surrounding terrain, and approximately 10 meters from the top of the wall. A single rough staircase climbs up the eastern wall to the entrance (area 1).

1. ENTRANCE AND GUARD POST

Two banthas graze on scrub brush growing around the base of a 20-meter-tall plateau. A makeshift crane with cables leading up the side of the mesa is affixed to the top of the cliff.

Allow each hero a Spot check (DC 15) to

notice the crude steps, actually closer to handholds than stairs, cut into the cliff wall. A Search check of DC 10 will also find these, though the heroes will almost certainly be seen by the guards (see below) as they examine the area.

Ascending via the steps requires a Climb check of DC 10. (Scaling the cable is DC 15, since it's too far from the cliff to brace against it.) This would be a simple task (in fact, the heroes could take 10 and almost certainly succeed) except for the fact that the approach is guarded by a pair of raiders hidden in a niche (labeled 1a on the map) near the top. They can only be seen with a Spot check of DC 25.

The guards get a Spot check (DC 10 or opposed by the heroes' Hide checks) to notice the heroes approaching, and another (DC 15 or opposed by the heroes' Hide checks) to notice them climbing the wall. They almost certainly see the heroes if they approach in daylight.

If the guards spot the heroes, they wait until one or more begins to climb the cliff, at which point they lean out of their hiding place (lowering the DC of the Spot check to notice them to 20) and attack, possibly with surprise. They get a +2 bonus

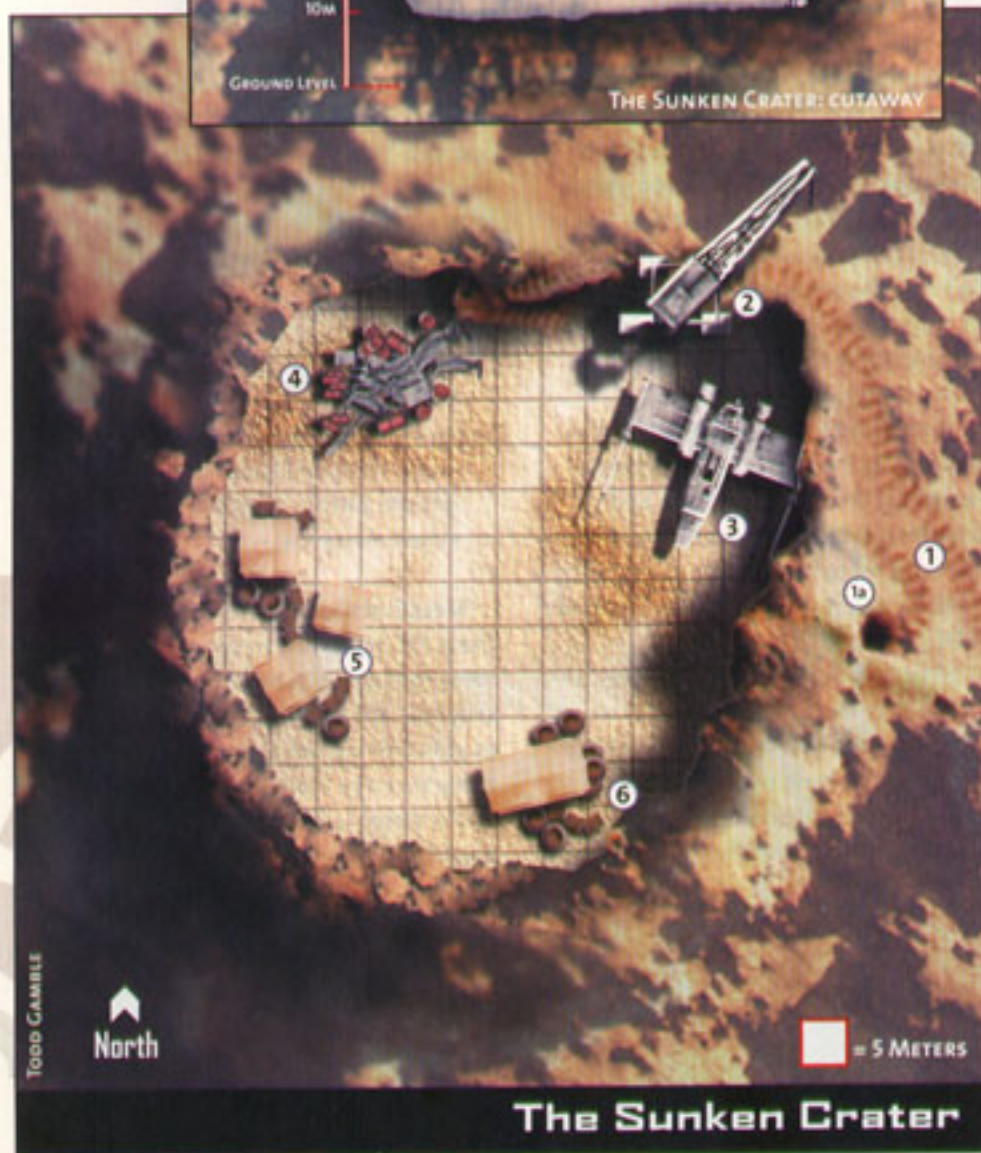
to attack climbing characters, and climbers lose any Dexterity bonus to Defense. Any hit against a climbing hero forces another Climb check (DC 10) to avoid falling. The hero can't take 10 on this check.

Raider guards (2), Male Human Frg 1:
Init +2 (Dex); Defense 15 (+2 Dex, +3 class);
Spd 10m; VP/WP 9/13; Atk +2 melee (1d8+2, spear), +2 ranged (1d8+2, bow); SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +1; SZ M; FP 0; Rep 0; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 10.
Equipment: Spear, bow, 10 arrows.
Skills: Climb +6, Handle Animal +4, Hide +6, Listen +5, Ride +6, Spot +5, Survival +8.

Feats: Alertness, Skill Emphasis (Survival), Weapon Group Proficiency (blaster pistols, primitive weapons, simple weapons).

Should combat occur, make a Listen check (DC 20) for the raiders inside the mesa each round. Success indicates that they hear the fight and move to join the guards, arriving two rounds later. (Normally they'd be more alert, but since their leader Yarrok is gone they're enjoying the opportunity to relax.)





hero has the Repair skill. Alternately, heroes can cooperate to grant bonuses to the primary character's Repair skill check (see "Cooperation" in Chapter 4: Skills). The heroes can also choose to attempt temporary (jury-rigged) repairs, which cuts the time in half and reduces the DC by 5; however, each time the ship is operated there is a 10% chance that the repairs fail. (In this case, randomly choose an important ship system that fails and must be repaired.) The ship has also suffered 80 points of hull damage, though this need not be repaired for the ship to function.

4. SUPPLY DEPOT

Stacks of boxes, crates, and barrels litter this area, all pillaged from travelers, outlying settlements, or garbage dumps. An hour of digging through the junk (and a Search check of DC 15) turns up one of the following items (each time an item is found, cross it off the list and reroll if it is rolled in a later search). Feel free to substitute other items of similar value if desired.

d% ROLL	ITEM FOUND
01-20	Food, 2d10 kg
21-50	Water, 4d10 kg
51-52	Spice, 1d4 kg
53-57	Energy cells, 1d6
58-62	Power packs, 1d4
63-67	Blaster pistol, broken*
68-72	Slugthrower pistol
73-77	Stun baton, broken*
78-82	Electrobinoculars, broken*
83-87	Datapads, 1d4, broken*
88-92	Macrobinoculars
93-97	Tool kit
98-00	Glowrod

*Broken items can be repaired with a Repair skill check (DC 15) and a few minutes of work.

5. RAIDERS' TENTS

Each of these three tents has two crude bunks strewn with clothes and miscellaneous personal items (nothing of value). The tent in the center has two resting raiders (who may be alerted by sounds of combat at area 1). The tents are otherwise identical.

Alternatively, the heroes might choose to ascend without using either the cable or the handholds. This requires a Climb check (DC 20) for each round of movement (a hero can climb one-half his speed as a full-round action). This can avoid the guards, though the guards will show up if fighting breaks out inside the mesa later.

2. MAKESHIFT CRANE

The raiders built a ramshackle winch assembly from scrap metal and several lengths of cable. After dragging Tosh's spacecraft to the base of the plateau, they hitched the banthas to the crane and used pulleys to raise the small fighter up and over the mesa wall.

Despite its jury-rigged nature, the crane

is quite stable and can easily support the weight of several characters.

3. CAPTURED STARFIGHTER

Renci Tosh's small Z-95 Headhunter sits here underneath a tan-colored tarpaulin. The raiders plan to sell it to someone in town (in fact, their leader, Yarrok, is there right now trying to find a buyer). They don't have the skill to repair the damage done to it.

Making the craft spaceworthy again requires significant repair work: three Repair checks (DC 20), each requiring 1d4 hours of work. (Don't forget that unless the heroes happen to carry starship repair tools with them, they suffer a -5 penalty to Repair skill checks.) These checks may be made simultaneously if more than one

Raiders (2), Male Human Thg 1: Init +0; Defense 10; Spd 10m; WP 12; Atk +2 melee (1d8+1, spear), +1 ranged (1d8+1, bow); SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will +0; SZ M; FP 0; Rep 0; Str 13, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 8. Equipment: Spear, bow, 10 arrows. Skills: Climb +5, Survival +2. Feats: Armor Proficiency (light), Weapon Group Proficiency (blaster pistols, primitive weapons, simple weapons).

6. YARROQ'S TENT

The leader of the raiders is a Trandoshan named Yarroq. His brash confidence and physical power allow him to maintain control over the unruly group of thugs and fringers.

Yarroq's tent is twice as big as those of the other raiders, though it's just as free of amenities as theirs. A successful Search check (DC 15) turns up an extra blaster power pack in his footlocker.

Yarroq is currently visiting The Junkyard, trying to sell Tosh's Z-95, though he returns while the heroes investigate the mesa (see below).

The Leader Returns

At some point during the heroes' repair work on the Z-95, the raiders' leader, Yarroq, returns to the mesa. This can happen at any point you deem appropriate to the story.

Assuming that the heroes encountered and defeated the guards at area 1a, Yarroq immediately suspects a problem when he notices that the guards are gone. He and the pair of raiders accompanying him approach quietly looking for intruders or thieves.

Yarroq and his raiders fight bravely, though he flees if things go too badly. He happily accepts offers of surrender from the heroes, figuring he can ransom them to friends or relatives in town.

Raiders (2), Male Human Thg 1: Init +0; Defense 10; Spd 10m; WP 12; Atk +2 melee (1d8+1, spear), +1 ranged (3d6, blaster pistol); SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will +0; SZ M; FP 0; Rep 0; Str 13, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 8. Equipment: Spear, blaster pistol. Skills: Climb +5, Survival +2. Feats: Armor Proficiency (light), Weapon Group Proficiency (blaster pistols, primitive weapons, simple weapons).

Aftermath

Once the heroes complete the repairs to Renci Tosh's starfighter and defeat Yarroq and his raiders, Renci prepares to leave Ord Mantell. After retrieving a hidden cred stick from her starfighter, she transfers the agreed-upon sum of credits to each hero. Assuming the heroes have made a good impression (both in competence and opinions of the Empire and Rebellion), she also admits to them her affiliation with the Rebellion and asks if they would be interested in helping again in the future. Read the following text to the players:

With your repairs to Renci Tosh's Z-95 complete, and the reward fully paid, Renci says her farewells. As she makes final preparations for departure, she turns toward you.

"You handled yourselves pretty well in the last few days. I have to admit, I wasn't completely honest with you. In addition to being an explorer, I also occasionally recruit help for some friends of mine who are always looking for new blood. Maybe you've heard of the Rebellion?"

"We're still fairly secretive and quiet, but we're growing in power every day. Anyway, if you're interested in fighting against the Empire, I can introduce you to some influential people who can point you in the right direction."

"So what do you say? Want to help us restore freedom to the galaxy?"

This represents a prime opportunity for the heroes to get involved with the Rebellion. Of course, the precise ramifications of the heroes' decision is up to you, the Gamemaster. Renci Tosh can certainly introduce the heroes to some minor Rebellion leaders (for instance, she doesn't know Princess Leia, Mon Mothma, or other top-ranked Rebels), and with her good word, the heroes should get a good reception. From that point, the Rebellion can supply the heroes with missions (striking against Imperial bases, rescuing Rebel prisoners, aiding enslaved peoples, and so on).

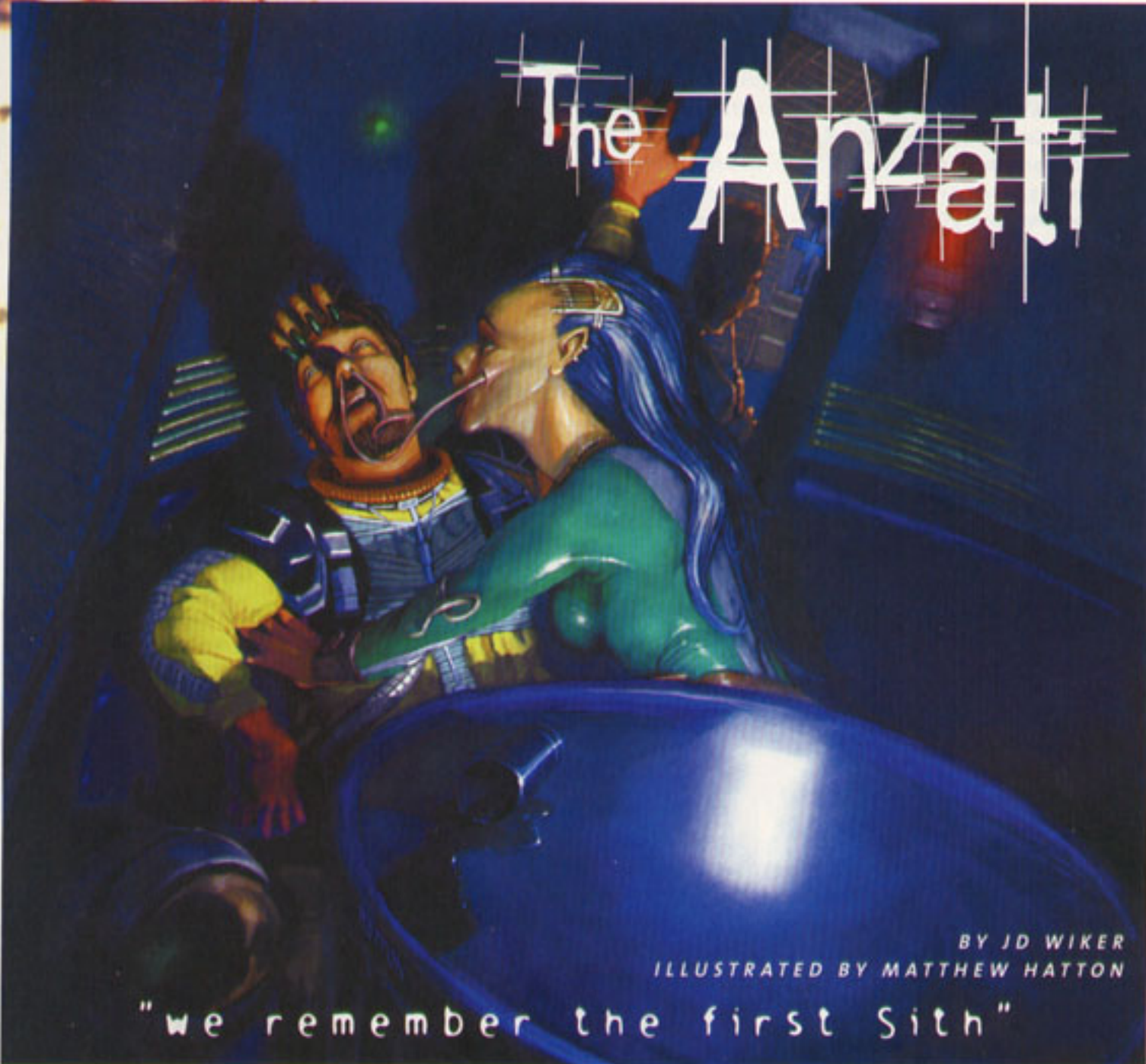
Alternately, the heroes might choose to maintain their independence for now. That's fine too—if they change their mind later, you can devise another adventure to bring them into contact with Renci or another Rebel.

Experience and Reputation

Each surviving hero receives an equal share of the 2,000 XP award for this adventure. Because the mission was relatively quiet, the heroes probably don't gain any Reputation points. Of course, if they succeeded in a flashy manner, or if they left plenty of witnesses to their success, you might award one point of Reputation to each hero. 



Yarroq, Male Trandoshan Scl 3: Init +5 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Defense 17 (+1 Dex, +1 natural armor, +5 class); Spd 10m; VP/WP 17/11; Atk +4 melee (1d3+2, punch) or +3 ranged (3d8, heavy blaster pistol); SQ Illicit barter, Better lucky than good, darkvision; SV Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +0; SZ M; FP 2; Rep 1; Str 14, Dex 12, Con 11, Int 15, Wis 8, Cha 10. Equipment: Heavy blaster pistol, credstick (5,000 credits). Skills: Bluff +6, Climb +5, Handle Animal +2, Hide +7, Knowledge (Ord Mantell system) +8, Listen +5, Move Silently +7, Read/Write Language (Basic, Dosh), Sense Motive +2, Speak Language (Basic, Dosh), Spot +5, Survival +2. Feats: Improved Initiative, Quickness, Weapon Group Proficiency (blaster pistols, simple weapons).



The Anzati

BY JD WIKER

ILLUSTRATED BY MATTHEW HATTON

"we remember the first Sith"

EVERY CULTURE HAS LEGENDS OF DARK SPIRITS that come in the night and suck the life from the living: vampires. In STAR WARS, those spirits are the Anzati. Creatures of single-minded purpose, they spend their long, long lives surviving from one meal to the next—in the process, depriving living beings of their own lives. For an Anzat, each meal consists of life essence. For the poor creature chosen as the meal, the Anzat is death.

The Story of the Anzati

The youngest of the Anzati are ancient. The ages of the eldest can be measured in eons. They roamed the galaxy when the Republic was just a dream of the Core Worlds. They exist because sometimes, to maintain a balance, the strong must be culled, along with the weak.

Thousands of worlds across the galaxy have legends of the Anzati, yet no culture's creation myths include their origin. To some, this implies that the Anzati have been around longer than any other species, or that they survived, by thousands of centuries, the only other species to share their homeworld. Others

believe that the Anzati evolved simultaneously with humankind, somewhere beyond the knowledge of sentient races, only to enter galactic society at large when hyperspace exploration put the Anzati homeworld within reach of the Republic.

Where that world might be is anyone's guess. No one has ever discovered a planet full of Anzati—or at least, discovered it and lived to tell of it. The Anzati simply dwell among the sentient species of the galaxy, blending into the dizzying myriad of cultures—invisible because, until one reveals its true nature to a victim, an Anzat is just another alien. And, of course, once the victim sees the Anzat, it is too late to warn anyone else.



But though it is easy to picture the Anzati as heartless predators, that is no more true of them than it is of any species that eats another species to live. With their long lives, Anzati have time to develop and pursue all manner of interests; many are devoted patrons of the arts. A few have even produced works of art of their own: books, music, paintings, sculpture, films, and holos. Few have created more than one example in any given medium, however. For a being so long-lived as an Anzat, perfection at a craft is pointless; reaching the pinnacle of an art is no real accomplishment if its only other practitioners died off a thousand years ago.

Perhaps the only art they truly find worth mastering is the art of stealth. The Anzati are accomplished hunters, tracking their quarry silently, invisibly, and efficiently. Their abilities serve them in avoiding notice as well. Despite occasional noticeable individuals, all Anzati diligently maintain as low a profile as possible, disappearing into the galaxy's crowds as soon as anyone appears to notice their activities, abilities, or longevity.

Luck Soup

Anzati feed on a substance they refer to as "Luck." The actual substance they drain out of living beings—the gelid, mucoid medium for the Luck—they refer to as "soup." Anzati believe that Luck governs a living being's personal presence. Thus, the more presence a being has, the more potent the Luck is likely to be. Particularly fortunate individuals are tasty meals for the Anzati.

Though life essence and luck are manifestations of the Force, the Luck upon which Anzati feed is only peripherally related. Certainly, beings who are particularly gifted in the Force are appetizing to an Anzat, but this is usually because their close connections with the life energy of the universe present the appearance of great personal presence. Of course, experienced Jedi usually have both powerful personal life essence and a close connection with the universe's through the Force. The Anzat who makes a meal of such a Jedi is a rare and terrible creature indeed.

The Anzati, of course, consider such discussions academic. "The Force" is a concept developed by younger species. It is a concept Anzati do not recognize as any more correct than any of a dozen theories before. They know only that weak-willed beings are as unsatisfying as table scraps. To subsist on the average sentient, an Anzat would have to feed on a dozen beings every day. And since the meal rarely survives the feast, the Anzat would leave a trail of corpses. On a world without sentient beings, or in a place where Luck is in short supply, an Anzat could easily starve to death. Most of the galaxy, however, is unfortunate in this regard: the Anzati are not liable to die off so easily—sentient beings are plentiful enough to feed a legion of them.

Anzati Abilities

Because the Anzati prey upon those whose life force is strong, they must be stronger. While Anzati tend to possess exceptional might and often startling reflexes, they are not supernaturally endowed. At best, they reflect the pinnacle of Human athletic ability; at worst, they merely have the attributes of an ordinary Human.

But physical strength is only a small part of the equation. To sense the presence of Luck in others, they have highly developed sensory organs unknown in other sentient species. And to physically drain Luck's connection from living beings, they must be physically adapted to do so. For the Anzati, these things are interconnected.

Anzati Tracking

An Anzat uses his or her sense of personal presence to hunt, detecting prey's Luck. When using the Track feat, the Anzat may use the See Force skill, rather than the Survival skill to locate and follow quarry. Though an Anzat can track using Survival, the Anzat gains a situation bonus to his or her See Force check equal to the target's character level. The stronger the target's soup, the more the target stands out to the Anzat's senses.

Anzati Feeding

The Anzati feed by drawing Luck out of wherever it resides in a victim. (The precise location varies by species; in most humanoid species, it lies within the brain cavity.) To reach it, the Anzat extends thin proboscises—normally kept coiled in cheek pockets located on either side of its nose—and inserts them into the victim, often through the sinus cavities. Almost of their own, the proboscises seek the victim's soup, and begin draining it into the Anzat. The victim can struggle, though often the Anzat's attack is so sudden, so perfect, that it is too late.

Anzati feeding drains character levels from the victim. Each round after the Anzat has inserted its proboscises, the victim loses two character levels, suffering a corresponding loss of experience points, Vitality Points, skill ranks, attack bonuses, saving throws, feats, and maximum Force Points. If the Anzat's attack reduces the victim to zero levels, the victim dies. Survivors of the assault have enough experience points to put them at the middle of their new (lower) level and may regain lost levels through accumulation of experience as normal.

Despite myths to the contrary, victims of the Anzati do not become Anzati themselves.

Anzati Longevity

Anzati can live for millennia, sustained by the life essence they draw from others. An Anzat who does not feed at least once every few days merely grows hungry. Lack of sufficient meals has no more of a supernatural aging effect on an Anzat than it has on a Human.

A common misconception among those who study tales of the Anzati is that they are hyper-developed scholars, experts in fields of knowledge and craft long since forgotten by younger species. While Anzati can remember things that happened centuries earlier, they have little or no interest in pursuing

mastery of any given area of expertise or knowledge—other than feeding. To the Anzati, the important skills to pass on to their offspring are the arts of stealth and the kill; everything else is just amusing diversion, hardly worth the effort of committing to memory.

Dannik Jerriko

An assassin and bounty hunter, the Anzat Dannik Jerriko is an occasional employee of Jabba the Hutt. He takes assignments whenever it suits him to do so, for Jabba is one of the few who know Jerriko's true nature and keeps him well fed. Between jobs, the Anzat preys upon other killers and assassins—not out of any professional jealousy, or even a sense of morality or justice. Jerriko simply knows that the families of the innocent dead frequently search for their loved ones' killers. Those who hire killers rarely blink when their employees turn up dead.

Jerriko operates mostly on the Outer Rim. Over a thousand years old, he has wandered much of the galaxy, but finds frontier locales like Tatooine and Nar Shaddaa perfectly suited to his needs, in that the authorities rarely bother to autopsy the dead. Thus, Jerriko's victims go unnoticed as the work of an Anzat.

Jabba the Hutt first attracted the meticulous Jerriko in Hutt Space, where the Anzat was able to dispose of a certain troublesome Force wizard without attracting undue attention, either to himself, or to Jabba. Though Jerriko's prices were high, Jabba hired

Lawless places controlled by Jabba are perfect hunting grounds for Jerriko.

the Anzat again and again, never complaining. The Hutt had heard about Jerriko's first employer, who had objected to the Anzat's steep fee, but had not survived the renegotiation meeting.

Throughout fifty years of on-again, off-again employment, Jerriko has never wandered too far from Jabba's sphere of influence—mostly because the lawless places Jabba controls are perfect hunting grounds for the Anzat. It was while in Jabba's employ that Dannik Jerriko chanced to pass through Mos Eisley at the precise time when Han Solo was meeting the forgotten Jedi Knight Obi-Wan Kenobi for the first time. Though the Anzat was doubtful he could take the old Jedi's soup—and the Jedi's young apprentice, local boy Luke Skywalker, was not fully seasoned yet—the Corellian smuggler's soup was almost irresistible. Knowing that Jabba had put a price on Han Solo's head anyway, Jerriko began to stalk him. But Solo was too lucky, and managed to escape.

Jerriko became angry and bitter over having missed such a tempting meal. He remained in Mos Eisley for years, stewing over his failure, until he learned that another bounty hunter, Boba Fett, had captured Solo and brought him back to Tatooine. Eagerly, Jerriko infiltrated Jabba's palace, hoping to take Solo's soup before Jabba fed the smuggler captain to his pet rancor—only to find

Solo just beyond his reach, encased in carbonite and watched over day and night.

For the first time in his existence, Dannik Jerriko went a bit insane. He began waging a war of terror on Jabba's court, hoping to frighten everyone away so that he could free Solo from the carbonite and drink his soup. But someone—a Human female, vaguely reminiscent of the young Skywalker—beat him to it, and Solo was placed under heavy guard. In a confusing flurry of events, the young Skywalker returned—almost as seasoned as his old master, Kenobi, had been—killed Jabba's rancor, and was taken out to the Great Pit of Carkoon, where he somehow managed to kill Jabba. The Hutt's courtiers fled the palace, leaving Jerriko alone with the B'Omar monks from the lower levels. Watching them work on the few hapless souls who had foolishly remained behind, Jerriko finally regained his composure, and settled down to plotting once again to cross paths with Han Solo for the last time. **E**

Dannik Jerriko

Male Anzat Force Adept 4/Scoundrel 5/Bounty Hunter 5:

Init +5 (+1 Dex); Def 20 (+1 Dex); Spd 10m; VP/WP 88/12; Atk +14/+9/+4 melee (1d3, punch), +12/+7/+2 ranged; SQ Level drain, better lucky than good, target bonus (+2), sneak attack (+4d6); SV Fort +6, Ref +9, Will +8; SZ M; FP 7; DSP 2; Rep 7; Str 17, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 15, Wis 13, Cha 10.

Equipment: Pipe.

Skills: Bluff +9, Gather Information +12, Hide +17, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (ancient cultures) +6, Knowledge (Anzati) +8, Knowledge (Force-user lore) +6, Knowledge (population centers) +8, Listen +8, Move Silently +17, Sense Motive +14

Force Skills: Empathy +14, See Force +17

Feats: Alertness, Endurance, Force Sensitive, Improved Initiative, Low Profile, Stealthy, Track, Weapon Group Proficiency (blaster pistols), Weapon Group Proficiency (blaster rifles), Weapon Group Proficiency (primitive weapons), Weapon Group Proficiency (simple weapons)

Force Feats: Alter, Control, Sense





The Shaft: Endor's Game

Can *Death Star II* Cards Help Biker Scouts Secure Endor On Their Own?

BY CORY HERNDON

Welcome, and join us for our debut plunge down "The Shaft." Every month, we'll feature a STAR WARS CCG deck that places theme above strategy... to a point. Decks that get "The Shaft" may not win 100 percent of the time, but we think they're just crazy enough that they could take your opponent by surprise.

Just to make things hard on ourselves the first time out, this month we'll be avoiding "mains" like the plague. Don that shiny white armor, trooper, we're going the forest moon of Endor. How would you like your Ewok?

Biker Surprise

This month's Shaft-ed deck is built around the Endor Operations objective. You might well win a tournament game or two, especially if you're playing in a Dark Jedi-heavy environment. If you really can't handle the thought of going into a game without your Vader security blanket, swap out a *Tempest Scout* and a *Scout Blaster*, although I'd recommend keeping it Vader-free.

The skies of Endor will need protecting (after all, your Objective requires that you start with the system in play), and for that you'll rely on a couple of the new *Death Star II* Star Destroyers—the *Accuser* and *Chimaera*—along with the venerable *Executor*. Not the new *Flagship Executor*, cool as it is, but the older one from the *Dagobah* expansion with built-in immunity to attrition that doesn't require an extra card.

Changing Gears

If you'd like to exchange a little more speed on the ground in return for some raw power, you might consider stripping out the *Tempest Scouts* entirely and replacing them with more *Speeder Bikes*. Worried about *Enhanced Premiere* mains coming down and spoiling your fun? *Sneak Attack* will make short work of them through some guaranteed attrition (just keep *Admiral Piett* off the ground), and *Freeze!* will prevent any heavy hitters from immediately chopping into your troopers. Even if *Obi-Wan* swings his saber

through your soldiers with impunity, if he's on Endor alone that hungry Jedi will go missing thanks to *Always Thinking With Your Stomach*. Perhaps the toughest challenge for this deck will be offered by *Hidden Base*, but *Security Precautions* should help out there.

Go on ahead, scout around, see what you can find. There's bound to be rebel scum somewhere on this Palpatine-forsaken planet. Hop to it, trooper!

CHIM, CHIM, CHIMAERA

The appearance of Thrawn's flagship in DSII provides another hard-to-kill Imperial battlewagon, and foreshadows the inclusion of more and more "expanded universe" material in the STAR WARS CCG.



ESCORT, GO

Your Biker Scouts get even better with this 4-destiny wonder. The extra forfeit is nice, but check out the rest: when Luke takes a swing with that pigsticker at any pilot on a vehicle (like, say, a speeder) he'll suddenly have to beat defense value of 5 for the bike and the scout.



TRUTH OR INCONSEQUENCES

Few things stop a trooper deck faster than attrition. Let *Scout Blasters* soak up incidental forfeit and then watch those swords turn back into high-destiny plowshares.



SHOW A LITTLE PIETT-Y

The freshly promoted commander of the mighty *Executor* will help you secure and hold Endor, so long as he doesn't steer the giant pie wedge into any battle stations.



PERFECT SARKLI

He's a spy, so he'll work for purposes of **Sneak Attack**, and he's handy in case your opponent comes at you with a pesky **Local Uprising**.



EAGLE SCOUT

Death Star II's Colonel Jon will lead your scouts through thick and thin while he keeps an eye peeled for **Surprise Attacks**.



KEEP THOSE HANDS WHERE I CAN SEE 'EM

Scads of troopers and an armory of **Scout Blasters** should theoretically make this card pretty useful.



LITTLE OLD TROOPER FROM WAKEELMUI

Sergeant Barich should help keep the inevitable attrition down as long as he stays alive.



Three for the High-Speed Repulsorlift Road

Prepared Defenses (and its Light counterpart, **Heading For The Medical Frigate**) could threaten to dethrone **Twi'lek Advisor** and **The Signal** as the Starting Interrupt staple of many diverse deck types. Three Effects at the start of the game is darn near irresistible, even though the pool of cards that meet the specifications is pretty small. In the case of "Bike Curious," you'll find Effects that maximize the effectiveness of your biker scouts, spies, and even other Effects.

THE BIKER SCOUT MOTTO

Biker Scouts can always "be prepared" thanks to this card, which lets you start with **Biker Scout Gear**, **Inconsequential Losses**, and **Royal Escort** (for example).



GEAR HEAD

Scramble your opponent's Scramble and toughen up those biker scouts with their very own Gear. And look! Those six **Scout Blasters** just became destiny 6!



ARRESTING DEVELOPMENTS

You won't be using this card to bring out any docking bays, but you'll love the extra +2 forfeit that will go to nearly all of your characters. The limitations on **Nabrun Leids/Elis Helrot** are icing on the cake.



RUN LUKE, RUN

Jedi are by definition hard to hit—and the Light Side seems just lousy with guardians of peace and justice lately. Knock a chink in their armor with **You Cannot Hide Forever**. Don't ditch it unless you're pretty sure your opponent is Jedi-poor.



Bike Curious

Starting (8)

- 1 Endor Operations/Imperial Outpost
- 1 Endor
- 1 Endor: Bunker
- 1 Endor: Landing Platform
- 1 Prepared Defense
- 1 Biker Scout Gear
- 1 Inconsequential Losses
- 1 Imperial Arrest Order

Characters (15)

- 1 Admiral Piett
- 3 Biker Scout Trooper
- 1 Captain Sarkli
- 1 Colonel Davod Jon
- 1 Corporal Avarik
- 1 Corporal Drellosyn
- 1 Corporal Misik
- 1 Corporal Oberk
- 1 Lieutenant Grond
- 1 Sergeant Barich
- 2 Sergeant Elsek
- 1 Sergeant Irol

Locations (4)

- 1 Endor: Ancient Forest
- 1 Endor: Back Door
- 1 Endor: Dense Forest
- 1 Endor: Forest Clearing

Effects (6)

- 1 Closed Door
- 1 Establish Secret Base
- 1 Ominous Rumors
- 1 Royal Escort
- 1 Security Precautions
- 1 You Cannot Hide Forever

Interrupts (9)

- 1 Always Thinking With Your Stomach
- 2 Blast Points
- 1 Compact Firepower
- 1 Don't Move!
- 1 Freezel
- 1 Outflank
- 2 Sneak Attack

Weapons (6)

- 6 Scout Blaster

Vehicles & Starships (10)

- 1 Accuser
- 1 Chimaera
- 1 Executor
- 4 Speeder Bike
- 1 Tempest Scout 3
- 1 Tempest Scout 5
- 1 Tempest Scout 6



This is Some Rescue!

Is Prisoner 2187 Good Enough to Make Rescue the Princess a Worthwhile Objective?

BY MICHAEL MIKAELIAN

A Few Stormtroopers Short Of A Squad

If you're anything like me, you've been trying to convince your friends for over a year that the **Rescue The Princess** objective from *Special Edition* is one of the best cards ever. Never mind that **Hidden Base** single-handedly deploys systems from your deck, cancels Force drains, and makes your opponent pay to draw cards. Never mind that **There Is Good In Him** lets you deploy **Luke Skywalker** and **Luke's Lightsaber** for free and can end the game in one swift action. Never mind that **Throne Room/Revolution** is still popular even though it's been played since the beginning of time. None of them add to attrition. None of them remove immunity to attrition. None of them removes unique characters, vehicles, or starships from the game.

Chances are you're nothing like me. No one—except for 1996 World Champion Raphael Asselin—has made anything out of **Rescue The Princess/Sometimes I Amaze Even Myself**. No one except me. After feverishly trading for the objective and three **8D8**s, I assembled the first incarnation of this instrument of mass destruction. It went undefeated for weeks. The same guy lost to it three tournaments in a row (and he's pretty good). Then came the dark times. Defeat after bloody defeat. Finally, I decided to retire the old girl.

Then Something Wonderful Happened

Third Anthology was not just another premium product, but a vessel of salvation. Inside this miracle box was **Prisoner 2187**. **Prisoner 2187** is the Charles Atlas to Rescue's 95 lb. weakling. Now everyone's

jumping on the Rescue bandwagon. Raphael will undoubtedly be hailed as a genius, and I'll be the gnarled old man sitting on the porch telling stories to anyone who'll listen.

I Remember When I First Played Rescue....

Many elements of my original design are still included in this most recent version of the deck. First I chose which of the three methods I'd use to rescue Leia. Though **8D8** has all the vulnerabilities of being a droid, it has no other drawbacks. **I'm Here To Rescue You** and **Cell 2187** both require another card to be effective, plus they leave you vulnerable to being battled. **8D8** is hands-down the best of the three. Now that I know how I'm going to release Leia, I need to get her to Yavin 4 and keep her alive.

The Rebel Transit System

How do you get a card from one site to another with a trip through two docking bays in between? Vehicles. Though each card can only make one limited move, those single moves can stack up. With a **Lift Tube** and **Air-2 Racing Swoop** at your disposal, you can release Leia (retrieving 4 Force), Force drain for 4, then move all the way from the **Detention Block Corridor** to the **Massassi War Room** in one turn. Oh, and you flip **Rescue The Princess**.

Now that you've released Leia, you've got to keep her safe. There is a host of cards that do that. About one of each is in here. Not every one works in every situation, but you should have two or three alternatives in your hand most of the time. The best advice I can give is, "don't release Leia on an empty hand." If you don't have

any "evasion" cards (such as **Dodge** or **Narrow Escape**) don't release Leia. The exception to the rule is if you have a large Force pile to draw from after Leia is released.

Now What?

As long as **Sometimes I Amaze Even Myself** is on the table, your opponent should be frightened to death of going near any of your characters. This is especially deadly against a deck that relies on key characters like **Darth Vader**, **Emperor Palpatine**, **Lando Calrissian**, etc. Just in case your opponent feels like avoiding your characters, you can stay on top of them with **Air-2 Racing Swoops**, or just make them lose Force to **Order To Engage**. If your opponent throws too much stuff at you, you have plenty of "evasion" cards.

One other thing: **Sometimes I Amaze Even Myself** lifts the ban on **Death Star Plans**. If it goes unchecked, **Death Star Plans** can be the most efficient mass Force retrieval in the game. The problems you'll run into include **Come Here You Big Coward** (solution: occupy two battlegrounds long enough to retrieve your Force) and **Secret Plans** (solution: leave only one or two cards to draw as destiny instead of three).

Your Reward

It's simple. Rescue the princess, get her back to Yavin 4, and steal the **Death Star Plans** (repeatedly). Deploy your cards with ability to places that need a lesson, and give it to them. With any luck, your opponent will be running out of cards with ability while you retrieve yours. Pick and choose your battles carefully, and sometimes you'll amaze even yourself. 

This is Some Rescue

Starting (10)

- 1 Rescue The Princess/Sometimes I Amaze Even Myself
- 1 Death Star: Detention Block Corridor
- 1 Prisoner 2187
- 1 Death Star: Docking Bay 327
- 1 Yavin 4: Docking Bay
- 1 Yavin 4: Massassi War Room
- 1 Heading For The Medical Frigate
- 1 Insurrection
- 1 Wise Advice
- 1 Your Insight Serves You Well

Locations (3)

- 1 Dagobah: Yoda's Hut
- 1 Hoth: Echo Command Center
- 1 Rendezvous Point

Characters (17)

- 3 8D8
- 3 ASP-707
- 2 Luke With Lightsaber
- 1 Master Luke
- 1 Melas
- 3 Obi-Wan With Lightsaber
- 1 Orrimaarko
- 2 Prisoner 2187
- 1 Tawss Khaa

Starships & Vehicles (7)

- 2 Air-2 Racing Swoop
- 1 Gold Leader In Gold 1
- 1 Lando In Millennium Falcon
- 2 Lift Tube
- 1 Red Leader In Red 1

Interrupts (16)

- 1 Blast The Door, Kid!
- 2 Dodge
- 1 Effective Repairs
- 2 Fallen Portal
- 4 How Did We Get Into This Mess?
- 1 It's A Trap!
- 1 Levitation
- 1 Lift Tube Escape
- 1 Narrow Escape
- 1 Surprise Assault
- 1 Transmission Terminated

Effects (6)

- 1 Battle Plan
- 3 Death Star Plans
- 1 Order To Engage
- 1 What're You Tryin' To Push On Us?

Devices (1)

- 1 Landing Claw

1

The Set-Up

On your previous turn, set up your cards like this: 8D8 deploys to Yavin, and the vehicles deploy to the Death Star. Use the Lift Tube to get 8D8 to the Detention Block Corridor.

2

Run for the Border

After you release Leia, drain for 4 force and use the Lift Tube to move her and 8D8 to Docking Bay 327. Once there have them switch vehicles.

3

Almost There...

Move the Swoop to Yavin 4. Leia and 8D8 have not used their movement yet, so they can continue onward.

4

GOODAALI

Leia moves to the War Room. Now you are free to play Death Star Plans next turn.



BY HADEN BLACKMAN

STAR WARS STARFIGHTER

Triple Threat:

*Join Forces with Three New
Heroes in Starfighter*



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Take three heroes with different backgrounds and motives, throw them together in a fight against the Trade Federation, and let the player see the action from all three points of view. That's the basic concept behind *Starfighter*, LucasArts Entertainment's new flight sim. Set during the events of *Star Wars: Episode I The Phantom Menace*, *Starfighter* represents the next evolution in the company's flight sims. Planned to release in early 2001 for the PlayStation 2, *Starfighter* boasts a compelling story, engaging characters, a powerful new engine, huge environments, and unique design elements that set it apart from previous games.

The Story

Project Leader Daron Stinnett, who helmed *Outlaws* and *Dark Forces*, stressed

Starfighter's focus during the early stages of the game's development. "LucasArts prides itself on its stories," Stinnett says, "But we really wanted to go beyond what fans expect in a typical flight sim."

Starfighter is set just prior to the Trade Federation's blockade of Naboo. In the opening missions, the player is introduced to Rhys Dallows, a young pilot who hopes to become a member of Bravo Flight. As the story progresses, Rhys is separated from his squad. He soon finds himself in the care of Reti, a manic Toydarian engineer who rescues the young Nabooian. In order to survive far from home and strike back at the Trade Federation, Rhys must join forces with the human mercenary, Vana Sage, and a cold alien pirate named Nym. The three characters are united by their hatred for the Trade Federation and little else.

As part of *Starfighter's* design, players take control of each of the three main characters for specific missions. Players begin the game with Rhys as he attempts to climb the ranks of the Naboo air force. Later, they fly as Vana, undertaking her quest to learn more about the Trade Federation's



▲ A Naboo starfighter streaks through space.

nefarious schemes, before moving to Nym. Once the three characters unite, players transfer between vehicles depending upon each mission's profile.

As the three main characters, players have the opportunity to fly three distinct craft. According to the project's Lead Level Designer, Tim Longo, the team "tried to match [the starfighters] with the characters who fly them." Nym is large and imposing, and thus he flies a heavy bomber designed for destruction.



▲ The heroes confront the Trade Federation forces on Naboo's surface.



▲ Combat on Lok



▲ Two new starfighters, a Sigil and the G-400, high above the surface of Lok.

Vehicle Design

The vehicles in *Starfighter* are meant to be as compelling as the characters. The team devoted a great deal of time and energy to designing and fine-tuning each of the three major playable craft.

"Rhys is flying the Naboo Starfighter from the movie, so in a way, it's become our X-wing," explains Longo. "It's like the middle ground for the starfighters. From there, you have Vana, who is our Han Solo-type character. Her ship is quick, agile, and

"We really had fun with the pirate and mercenary ships... hand-built, custom graphics, huge engines"

built for stealth. Nym's starfighter is the bomber. It's a slower craft, but he always has faster wingmen whom the player can command."

"We're really lucky to have a strong story at the core because we keep going back to the story to drive other elements of the game," adds Production Manager Reeve Thompson. "We have three very different characters who come from very different backgrounds, and the Trade Federation is a character in itself. We can constantly go back to the story and characters to push the ship design in different directions."

As a result of the characters' personalities, each ship has unique elements. Nym's starfighter, the *Havoc*, has a bomb-

ing feature. Vana's ship sports a "sensor tag" that Longo describes as a versatile weapon. "It can nullify [enemy] shields, enabling Vana to do more damage to opponents," he explains. "She can also use it to keep track of targets." The "sensor tag" plays a large role in specific missions as well. "Basically, she'll tag something," Longo says, "and then Nym might come into the next mission and now be able to target stuff that he couldn't before. We've tried to establish continuity between missions."

All three player craft have a "sniper mode" that allows the player to zoom in on targets. And, true to many console titles, players can upgrade their weapons. As with all other aspects of the game, these upgrades are a result of the story: about halfway through the game, the characters discover technology that enables them to enhance their vehicles.

Aside from the three playable vehicles, the main characters face over 30 enemy starfighters ranging from the Scarab (a new Trade Federation fighter) to the droid

starfighters seen in the film. Capital ships, ground vehicles, and other threats also confront players.

When inventing new vehicles, the team found a wealth of inspiration.

Thompson notes, "Obviously, it's a *Star Wars* game and we keep in the *Star Wars* universe. But I think it's a really fertile ground, artistically, to be able to play off the two different time periods [Classic and Episode I]. In Episode I, the ships have a crafted look. Form drives the style. The N-1 Starfighter is a perfect example. That's such a gorgeous ship. It's like a fifties car. But as the Empire comes to power, you start getting a more militaristic, 'function over form' style to the *Star Wars* universe. In terms of *Starfighter*'s style, we've been able to incorporate this evolution. For example, the

Dagger, one the enemy ships, has hints of what's to come in the *Star Wars* films. But we also have ships based on the Naboo-type look."

Project Leader Stinnett adds, "We really had fun with the pirate and mercenary vehicles. We chose to take the style established by the Podracers: hand-built, custom graphics, huge engines. That theme allowed us to create ship concepts that really break the mold."

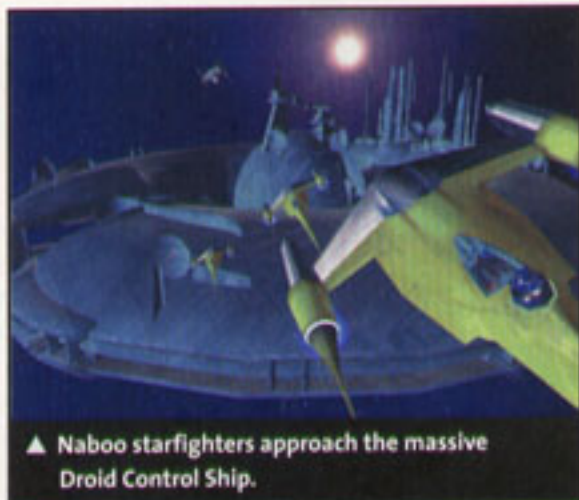
Mission Design

The battle between the three heroes and the Trade Federation spans the Naboo system. As either Nym, Rhys, or Vana, players must complete 14 missions spanning three separate worlds, including Naboo, and nine distinct environments. About half of the missions will take place in space, and half will occur in planetary atmospheres.

While many *Starfighter* missions are story-driven, others are objective-based, militaristic missions found in traditional flight sims. "You always have character and story things going on in the background, even with the objective-intensive missions," Stinnett explains.



▲ A Trade Federation lander on Naboo



▲ Naboo starfighters approach the massive Droid Control Ship.

Nym

Male Feeorin Soldier 7; IM +6 (+2 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Defense 16 (+4 class, +2 Dex); Spd 10m; VP/WP 71/16; Atk +10/+5 melee (1d3+3, punch) or +10/+5 melee (2d4+3, vibrodagger), +9/+4 ranged (3d8, heavy blaster) or +10/+5 ranged (8d6/4d6, thermal detonator); SV Fort +10, Ref +4, Will +3; SZ M; FP 3; Rep 2; Str 16, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 15.

Equipment: When away from his bomber, Nym usually carries a standard heavy blaster and a selection of other weapons, including thermal detonators and concealed vibro-blades. He can don armor if the need arises.

Skills: Astrogate +7, Demolitions +9, Disable Device +4, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (Lok) +5, Pilot +10, Repair +7, Speak Basic, Speak Lok Pirate's Cant, Survival +4.

Feats: Armor Proficiency (light, medium, heavy), Dodge, Endurance, Frightful Presence, Improved Initiative, Starship Combat, Starfighter Dodge, Weapon Focus (thermal detonator), Weapon Group Proficiency (blaster pistols, blaster rifles, repeating blasters, simple weapons, vibro weapons).

Personality: Nym is a tough, aggressive pirate captain. He is both feared and respected by his crew and his many competitors.



"The individual nature of each character played a major role in mission design"

The individual nature of each character and his or her vehicle played a major role in mission design. Early on, Rhys is assigned training or escort missions. Most of Vana's missions revolve around stealth, while Nym's are focused on destruction.

Although the storyline and missions intersect Episode I at key points, the game's finale is not revealed. "Let's just say that the last mission is going to be pretty surprising for the player," Stinnett hints.

Level Design

The design and implementation of the environments was one area in which the

Feeorin

Feeorins are hulking humanoids found in small colonies on a few Outer Rim worlds. Their planet of origin remains a mystery, but it is believed that Feeorin colonists abandoned the world eons ago following a radical climate change. The colony transports spread out to the far reaches of the galaxy in search of habitable planets. Those Feeorins who survived the search founded settlements on other worlds, where they were usually viewed as raiders or scavengers. Often hunted and eradicated by the native species, the Feeorin population dwindled. Currently, less than a million Feeorins still survive.

Like humans, Feeorins display a wide array of personalities, although many Feeorin explorers and spacers are considered gruff and dangerous. Feeorins come in many hues, from coal black to pale white, but green, yellow, and blue are the most common skin colors.

FEEOBIN SPECIES TRAITS

- +2 Strength, +2 Constitution, -2 Dexterity, -2 Wisdom, -2 Charisma. Feeorins are strong and healthy, but sluggish, sometimes quick to anger, and impersonal.
- Medium Size. As Medium-size creatures, Feeorins have no special bonuses or penalties due to their size.
- Feeorin base speed is 10 meters.
- Low-light vision. Feeorins can see twice as far as a human in dim light.
- +2 species bonus to Fortitude saves. Feeorins are extremely hardy and can shake off the effects of drugs, poisons, and other dangers with relative ease.
- Bonus Feat: Endurance. Feeorins can perform strenuous activity for prolonged periods without rest.
- Bonus Feat: Infamy. On worlds where Feeorins have settled, Feeorin characters may be regarded as evil or dangerous based on their species alone.
- All Feeorins know Basic and one other local language (at the GM's discretion).



▲ The Havoc circles for another bombing run.

team felt they could push boundaries. The levels range from small, compact areas to massive planetscapes. "Because of the story, we made some levels very small and confined," says Tim Longo. "When we make a decision like that, we can make the smaller areas much more detailed. But then we have levels like the Lok Pool, where the mission is meant to be more sprawling." Set on the Nym's homeworld of Lok, the "Lok Pool" environment is 2,500 square kilometers in size and represents one of the game's largest levels.

Creating such massive environments was necessary to preserve the sense of



▲ The huge play areas minimize "space walls."

story and maintain the player's suspension of disbelief. "The mission objectives themselves are relatively contained because we don't want to force the player to spend a lot of time flying from point A to point B," explains Stinnett. "But those extra kilometers cradle the mission and give players the sense that they're on a vast planet and not just in a little box with fog."

"One of the game's largest levels is 2,500 square kilometers"

Thompson expands upon this: "When you're playing a game and you bump into an invisible wall that's restraining you for gameplay purposes, you're immediately aware that you're playing a construction. You have to have those walls—you can't let players fly forever—but we've found a good balance. If someone wants to fly way off in the distance, they'll eventually hit a restraining wall. But if you're just playing the mission, you'll never hit one of those

walls because we don't put them close to the action. We let the player move around."

The team also created diversity in the game. "Our terrain is incredible," Thompson beams. "In terms of incorporating terrain into a flight sim and what you can do on a console, we're definitely pushing the envelope. We go through the whole spectrum. From space, where there's obviously no terrain; to Naboo hills, which represent a rolling terrain; to a canyon,

which is enclosed terrain; and eventually to the Droid Control Ship, which includes everything. It's remarkable that one game would have all these different environments to begin with, and each of these elements is fantastic in its own right."

Creating believable environments proved one of the most challenging tasks facing the developers. "It's been a learning process for us,"

Stinnett admits. "When we started out, the tendency was to make fantastical environments.

Lok is a red planet with a

typical desert landscape. Originally, it had a green atmosphere. It made you feel like you were definitely on another planet. You didn't mistake it for Earth. But one day, Pat Sirk, one of our terrain artists, swapped out the green atmosphere and replaced it with a blue atmosphere. It has subtle differences from Earth's atmosphere, but it's generally familiar. We looked at it and said, 'Yeah, that's it.' I realized that all the *Star Wars* environments are just extensions of Earth environments. A whole planet might be devoted to one Earth environment, but they're all basically familiar. By making that change, Lok felt much more *Star Wars* because it was easier to relate to."

PlayStation 2

Starfighter was originally intended as a PC product, but early in development the company

decided to focus on the PlayStation 2 as the game's primary platform. That decision in turn changed the overall design and provided the team with new opportunities. Stinnett reveals, "As we made the shift from PC to console title, the style of the game changed. It's now a more visceral experience that gamers expect on consoles."

The switch from PC to PS2 also proved beneficial in creating the game's engine, according to Stinnett. "It allows us to really focus on our technology because we know the platform we're developing for and we can make this game the best for that platform," he explains. "If we're developing for PC, or even across multiple platforms, we'd need to develop for the lowest common denominator in terms of hardware."

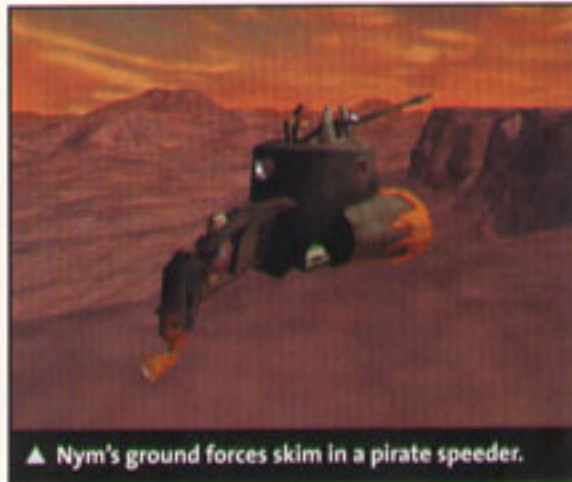
The PlayStation 2 is widely recognized as a formidable console. "There are also some



▲ The green, rolling terrain of Naboo is easily rendered on the PS2.

things that the PS2 can do that an average PC just can't do," Stinnett says. "It has the ability to draw incredible depth of things on the screen. You can have smoke, particle effects, and all kinds of other effects occurring in multiple layers. That just wouldn't be possible with the average consumer's PC hardware."

Technology helps tell the game's story and immerses players in the environments. "We're using particle systems in ways that really enhance the environments and the action we're trying to show," Thompson explains. "When you hit a ship, little particles break off. When we incorporate a waterfall into one of our



▲ Nym's ground forces skim in a pirate speeder.



▲ A Scarab, a manned Trade Federation fighter, takes some heavy damage.

scenes, we have particle systems going on there to create the sense of massive amounts of water falling from a three-kilometer hill. When ships blow up, the models themselves break apart, and each piece has its own smoke trail."

However, the team was careful not to become overwhelmed by new technology or let it dictate the game's appearance. "One of the things the PS2 does

"Technology plays a huge role in telling the story."

really well is a technique called reflection mapping," explains Stinnett. "It allows you to create a shiny surface on top of a [model's] base texture. But when everything has reflection mapping, it gives the game an unrealistic feel. Nothing in real life is actually that shiny. We used our own technology to apply a base texture, followed by a shiny



▲ Nym's bomber flanked by several Trade Federation landing craft.

coat, and then a dirt coat. The final coat dulls the shine in key places and varies it across the vehicle, so it looks more realistic."

According to Stinnett, the team has taken its lead from George Lucas. "George has always been a master in using effects to propel the story," he says. "If you go back to the original movies, the vehicles don't look shiny and new. They look beat up and worn, and it gives you a sense that these things

have been around a while, that they aren't just models or movie sets. They're real things. We tried to incorporate that idea into Starfighter."

Ultimately, the switch from PC to PS2 has been rewarding. "It's been really satisfying," Stinnett says. "Building technology while we're trying to finish the design, getting to the point where they're evolving hand-in-hand, and ending up with something that we're all so proud of is really satisfying."

Crunch Mode

There's little doubt that Starfighter is an ambitious project, but the team seems on track to meet its release date. As with many games, timely release may require an exhausting "crunch mode," where key people work around the clock to ensure the game's completion. Fortunately, Stinnett and Thompson describe their philosophy on crunch as "sane."

"I don't want anyone to be working 80 or 90 hours a week," Stinnett says. "I don't think that does any good in the end. It just burns that person out. It can burn out a whole team. But we are working harder. We have a few nights a week where we stay late and have dinner here. Every few weeks we come in on the weekends to get a milestone

out the door. What we're trying to avoid is extended crunch. It's okay to crunch for a few days or a week here or there, but people need a break."

Thompson also notes that LucasArts has been supportive in supplying the team with resources. "We've definitely been beefing up the team," he says. "The support we have from the company allows us to isolate things that need to get done, and we have more options to complete those tasks. We're in crunch mode philosophically because we're saying that we have a lot of work to do and we need to get it done soon. And we are getting a lot of work done. Every day, we're getting more work done than we got done the day before. But it's a sane crunch."



▲ Nym's bomber, the Havoc, makes short work of an enemy craft.

Stinnett adds, "I think it's about working smarter rather than working longer. Making sure that everyone knows their priorities, that they're putting all their energies into the really important things. That's what it means to work smarter: Focus on those things that, in the end, will make a great game."

Thompson agrees, and feels that the team is hitting on all cylinders as it advances toward final sign-off. "You always hope that you reach a point where everyone is working toward a common goal," he says. "And everyone knows what that goal is, and everyone knows their part. On this team, we're at that point. Everyone is focused on making Starfighter the best game it can be." ■

STAR WARS DEMOLITION

Jabba's Smash n' Crash:

*Demolition Offers Vehicular Combat
in a Galaxy Far, Far Away....*

Lucasarts Entertainment Production Manager Mike Gallo quietly slips a black, nameless disk into his PlayStation console. He's about to fire up *Star Wars Demolition*, LEC's first foray into the popular vehicular combat genre. In moments, he's controlling a menacing AAT battle tank, stalking a Tatooine desert landscape in search of victims. Gallo grins as a swoop appears on the horizon. As he approaches the swoop, Aurra Sing is clearly visible astride the vehicle. She unleashes a salvo of laser blasts, but the battle tank returns fire. Gallo barrels down on the swoop, reducing Sing's craft to slag. But then, the tank is rocked by another attack. Gallo swivels the vehicle to face his new opponent: an AT-ST near the Sarlacc pit in the distance.

"Watch this," Gallo says. At full speed, he rams the AT-ST, driving it back into the Great Pit of Carkoon. The Sarlacc's tentacles thrash the scout walker, severely damaging the vehicle. Before the AT-ST can recover, Gallo uses the AAT's special weapon: a super-charged turbolaser. The AT-ST collapses.

Slated for the PlayStation and Dreamcast, *Demolition* promises to be a rollicking game. With a host of vehicles and weapons from all four *Star Wars* films, the title is focused on action, although a basic story does frame the combat.

Demolition's storyline takes place between *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Return of the Jedi*. Jabba the Hutt, always searching for the next big gambling attraction, has invented an illegal underground contest in which competitors try to demolish one another in various arenas using customized vehicles and special weapons.

According to Gallo, "Jabba is very inventive. He knows that he needs to keep the

event exciting, so he manages to set up arenas on several different planets, including Hoth and Naboo. There's even a contest on the surface of the second Death Star."

Along with hidden weapons and power-ups, each of these levels presents unique dangers. On Death Star II, for example, players must avoid deadly TIE fighters and the firing superlaser. A giant wampa lurks on the Hoth level, while the mighty Sarlacc threatens players as they traverse Tatooine's Dune Sea.

Players begin the game by selecting from a number of different characters. "While these characters are an interesting part of the overall storyline," Gallo adds, "it's the vehicles that are truly important from a gameplay perspective. We started with a list of the really cool *Star Wars* vehicles and assigned them to characters." All of the vehicles should be familiar to fans. "We invented some of the characters," explains Gallo, "but the vehicles are straight out of the *Star Wars* continuity, although we had to modify a few before they were ready for combat."

Among the character/vehicle combinations are "Tamtel Skreej" (Lando Calrissian in disguise) aboard a desert skiff and Aurra Sing on her trusty swoop. New characters pilot Luke's landspeeder, a Rebel snowspeeder, a stolen AT-ST, a refurbished Trade Federation AAT battle tank, and a unique Podracer. Boba Fett is also prominently featured as the contest's reigning champion. Characters are taken from other continuity sources as well: One of the competitors is Wittin, a barbaric Jawa who was first identified in Decipher's customizable card game.



▲ Head 'em up, move 'em out! Rancor!

"Probably our most outrageous 'vehicle' is Jabba's rancor," Gallo reveals. "Malakili, the rancor's keeper (as seen in *Return of the Jedi*), rides on the monster's back. When the player picks up weapons, they attach to a shoulder harness worn by the creature. He also has special moves that allow him to toss enemies around."

As with many similar console games, *Demolition* will include "unlockable" levels and vehicles that become available as the player progresses through the game. "A player who beats the game will 'unlock' Boba Fett," Gallo explains. "We also have a few secret characters, and one ultra-secret character in the game."

Despite the game's premise, the team made every effort to mold *Demolition* around existing continuity. Detailed bios explain each character's motives, and the game strives to fit within the films and "Expanded Universe" sources. In Lando's case, for example, the team



▲ Okay, so, it's not canon. It's still fun.

drew inspiration from published material to explain his presence in Jabba's tournament. "We knew he was trying to infiltrate Jabba's palace as a guard named Tamtel Skreej," Gallo says. "We felt that Lando would probably try to prove himself to Jabba, and the tournament provides a perfect opportunity for him to show his loyalty and skill. We worked really hard to make everything work within the current continuity."

"But ultimately," Gallo chuckles, "we just wanted to make a really fun game with lots of stuff to blow up."

Like many projects, *Demolition* is a team effort. To develop the game, LucasArts has joined forces with Luxoflux, the group responsible for the *Vigilante 8* series of vehicular combat games. Gallo explains that this partnership is a logical move for LEC. "If we're going to team up with an out-

side developer, that developer's going to be the very best. In this case, Luxoflux is the very best at creating vehicular combat games." Activision is also involved in managing the project. "Activision actually brought the project to us, and we thought it was a great idea," Gallo says.

Dream Theater, a company that has produced a wide range of effects for films and video games, is creating all of the game's high-resolution movies (commonly known as "cutscenes"). "There's a cutscene at the beginning of the game, and then separate movies for each of the major characters when they 'win' the contest," Gallo says. "These 'victory' cutscenes essentially resolve each character's storyline. There are also individualized 'defeat' movies that play when a character loses the event."

Despite the number of companies

involved in developing *Demolition*, the game still meets LucasArts' high standards. "Whenever we work with an outside developer, we maintain complete creative control over the product," Gallo says. "We also remain intimately involved with the project on every level, from early design to final packaging. And, if we feel that anything in the game, from cutscenes to physics, does not meet LEC standards, we'll ask them to rework that area." LucasArts contributed to the design and handles all music, sound effects, voice recording, marketing materials, and primary testing.

Tired of questions, Gallo turns back to the game and gleefully destroys a STAP carrying Wittin's remote-controlled battle droid. Moments later, his AAT is almost crushed under the treads of a Jawa sandcrawler. "It must be retribution," he jokes. **E**

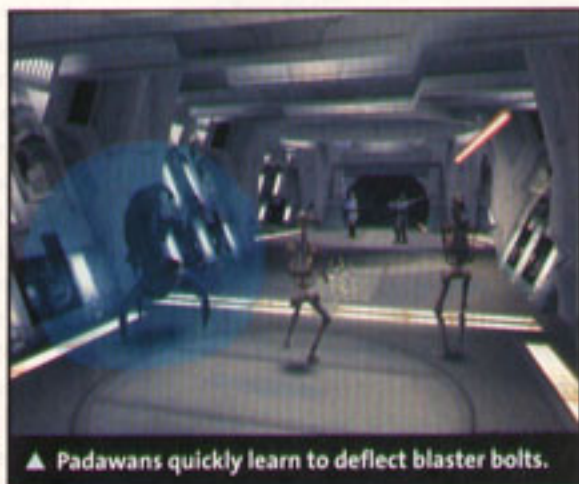
STAR WARS EPISODE I OBI-WAN

Padawan Power: LucasArts Entertainment Takes Jedi Combat To the Next Level

STAR WARS: EPISODE I *Obi-Wan* is aimed for a late 2000 launch, and LucasArts is promising an experience every bit as exciting as the acclaimed *Dark Forces* and *Jedi Knight* games. Developed for PC, *Obi-Wan* allows players to take control of the legendary Jedi Knight as he braves the events of *Star Wars: Episode I The Phantom Menace*. The game should be a unique opportunity for fans and gamers alike. Joel Dreskin, Product Marketing Manager for *Obi-Wan*, explains: "LEC doesn't often put players into the role of a central character from the films. But *Obi-Wan* is both a prominent figure in *The Phantom Menace* and among the most important characters

in the *Star Wars* universe." As the young Obi-Wan, players progress from Padawan learner to Jedi Knight while experiencing the story from Obi-Wan's perspective. "You hear his thoughts and undergo the trials that he experiences," Dreskin reveals.

LucasArts also hopes that *Obi-Wan* captures the feel and scope of Jedi combat. While *Jedi Knight* let players wield a lightsaber, *Obi-Wan* is the first game to integrate an intuitive "glyph combat system." Essentially, mouse movements translate into a wide variety of lightsaber attacks and other maneuvers consistent with the films. To heighten the game's



▲ Padawans quickly learn to deflect blaster bolts.

realism, the team uses motion-capture animation for most of Obi-Wan's movements. A distinct set of motion-capture animations has also been generated for Darth Maul.

"In *Episode I*, Jedi are in their prime," Dreskin says. "We had a chance to see a lot of the things they can do. *Obi-Wan* allows players to inhabit that role even more so than our other titles. We have all the acrobatics, all the lightsaber moves." Force powers seen in the film will also be tools in Obi-Wan's arsenal. **E**

STAR WARS EPISODE I BATTLE for NABOO

Freedom Fighters: Battle For Naboo *Explores Life on the Home Front*

STAR WARS: EPISODE I *The Phantom Menace* tracks the adventures of Queen Amidala and her Jedi guardians during the invasion of Naboo, but makes only passing mention of events taking place on the Queen's homeworld during her absence. What really happened to those trapped on the peaceful planet during the Trade Federation's occupation? That was the question Brett Tosti, Project Leader on *Rogue Squadron*, asked as he watched the film.

"Queen Amidala receives a message telling her that her people are starving," Tosti says. "In the back of my mind, I was visualizing what might be happening on Naboo. I knew that we were planning an Episode I follow-up to *Rogue Squadron*, and I thought that this would be a great opportunity to show what the Trade Federation and the Royal Security Forces were doing during and after the invasion." From this idea grew *Star Wars: Episode I Battle for Naboo*, LucasArts Entertainment's newest action-arcade game for the Nintendo 64.

With the help of his team, Tosti turned his initial concept into a larger storyline.



▲ People are starving! Better start shooting some droids.

"We developed a character [Gavyn Sykes] who is dedicated to helping the people of Naboo," Tosti explains. "Gavyn is a Royal Security Force officer, and throughout the game, he makes life for the Trade Federation miserable."

In stores this winter, *Battle for Naboo* tracks Sykes' adventures beginning with the invasion of Theed. Alongside his mentor, Captain Kael, Sykes must escape the city and find loyal allies. Once their forces have been assembled, Gavyn and Kael begin a series of hit-and-run attacks on the Trade Federation's facilities.

As Gavyn progresses through the game's sixteen levels, he must complete a number of difficult mission objectives. Missions may require Gavyn to liberate prison camps, destroy key Trade Federation facilities, or protect innocent civilians.

Throughout, Gavyn witnesses the Trade Federation's greed and destructiveness first hand. "From prison camps where the captives are used as slave labor to makeshift factories that pollute Naboo's environment, the Trade Federation reveals the extent of its evil," says Tosti. "These things galvanize the RSF soldiers, giving them a reason to fight."

Set entirely on Naboo, *Battle for Naboo* takes players to new regions of the planet. While the film depicted Theed, the Gungan swamps, and the final battlefield, LucasArts' title includes farmlands, snow-capped mountains, winding rivers, and other areas. "Players will feel that it is still Naboo," Tosti says, "but it's also something



▲ Aim High. Royal Security Force.

new." In addition, the game introduces original characters, locations, and technology to the *Star Wars* continuity. "We've invented a lot of material in order to make Naboo exciting and detailed," Tosti reveals.

As with *Rogue Squadron*, LEC is developing *Battle for Naboo* with Factor Five. "It truly is a co-development in every sense of the term," says Tosti. "Factor Five is responsible for all of the programming, music,

"Players will see more variety and detail everywhere they look."

and voice processing. LucasArts is handling the level design, artwork, testing, and voice recording."

Although *Battle for Naboo* is considered a follow-up to *Rogue Squadron*, the two games have numerous differences. To begin with, *Battle for Naboo* is more technologically advanced than its predecessor. Having worked on the N64 for over three years, the team is very familiar with the technology and has pushed the system's capabilities. "We've done some really innovative stuff from a technology standpoint," Tosti promises. "We now have the ability to expand upon what you saw in *Rogue Squadron*. Our knowledge of the system allows us to include much richer and more varied landscapes, models, vehicles, enemies, and objects. Players will see



▲ In space, no one can hear your R2 unit scream.

more variety and detail everywhere they look; they'll see more trees, more animals, more enemies, and more gameplay!"

New design elements in *Battle for Naboo* also set it apart from *Rogue Squadron*. According to Tosti, "*Rogue Squadron* was exclusively flight-based, whereas *Battle for Naboo* mixes flight and ground combat. Players now control STAPs, Flash speeders, Gian speeders, and AATs, along with N-1 starfighters and other air vehicles." During the course of any given

mission, a player can find a security outpost and actually change vehicles mid-level. The game features new vehicles as well: the team invented a "police cruiser" used to train N-1 pilots, a well-armored "heavy STAP," and a Trade Federation gunboat. As players hop between vehicles, the game's action remains intense and frenetic. "The action and gameplay is similar to the experience seen in *Rogue Squadron*, but it's now seen from

new perspectives and vehicles," Tosti says.

In all, players have access to seven different craft. Players can upgrade their vehicles and improve weapons by collecting special power-ups hidden throughout each level. These power-ups might increase a laser cannon's damage or recharge rate, for example, or provide a vehicle with new types of missiles.

In addition to the standard levels and vehicles, the game contains bonus levels and hidden vehicles. "Similar to *Rogue*

Squadron, we're giving these rewards based on the player's success in each level," say Tosti.

The story itself also promises some twists and surprises. "Gavyn will make some very strange friends," Tosti hints. And eventually, the game's plot will reconnect with the events of *Episode I*. Toward the game's finale, Gavyn will rendezvous with Captain Panaka and aid in the Queen's attempt to recapture Theed. After proving himself time and again, Sykes will even be asked to participate in the attack on the Droid Control Ship, as seen in the film's final battle. "As a member of Bravo Flight, Gavyn will play a key role," say Tosti. "We've carefully constructed the last missions to give the player a sense of accomplishment without conflicting with the *Episode I* storyline."

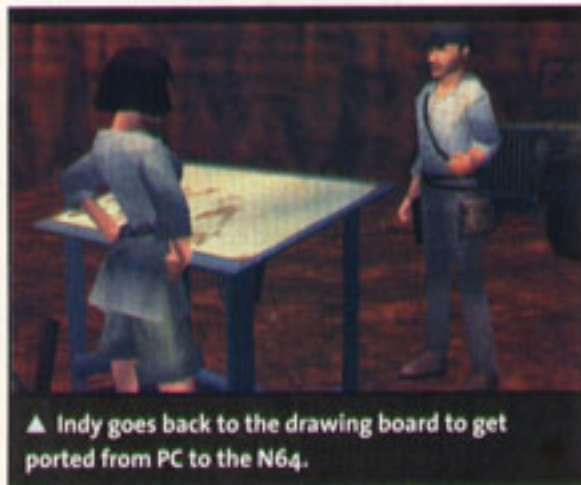
LEC hopes that players will find the storyline, characters, and action engaging and become part of the fight for freedom! 

INDIANA JONES

and the INFERNAL MACHINE™

Cracking the Whip:

Indiana Jones and the Infernal Machine
Prepares For Nintendo 64 Release



▲ Indy goes back to the drawing board to get ported from PC to the N64.

LucasArts Entertainment continues its tradition of transferring successful PC games to other platforms with a Nintendo 64 version of *Indiana Jones and the Infernal Machine*. Known as "Indy 64" around LEC, the "port" was completed with the help of Factor Five and is in stores now. To track the progress of the title and learn a bit more about the conversion

process, *Star Wars Gamer* tossed a few questions at Indy 64's Production Manager, Wayne Cline.

Star Wars Gamer: First off, let's cover the conversion process. Can you briefly describe porting a game from PC to N64?

Wayne Cline: It's like taking a house full of furniture, dishes, and appliances and stuffing that into a one-bedroom apartment!



▲ Evil lair designers never consider ergonomics.

SWG: Sounds like the process has been challenging. What factors have made the conversion difficult?

WC: It has been challenging. The biggest issue has been memory. The game shipped on the PC with a minimum memory requirement of 32MB; the N64 has only 4MB. Basically, we've had to turn the cartridge into a source of memory, and we

"We've changed the game to reduce the amount of button pressing you have to do to."

stream off it constantly, even as you play. Also, a game this large and complex that includes a flexible "save game" system allowing players to save all information has been a challenge. But we got it.

SWG: What other areas are important to think about when converting a game like this?

WC: I think controls are a big issue. With

the analog control on the N64, response is much more important. For example, when using the PC keyboard, Indy was either walking or running: press up arrow to walk, and hold down shift to run. With the analog stick, you need to have a greater range of speed so the player really feels like he or she is in control. Now, as you slowly press forward, Indy will tiptoe, move into a walk, then a jog, then finally, a run.

SWG: How has this particular port changed the game's overall design?

WC: Console games have a different mentality than PC games. I think they're inherently more action based. Therefore, whether you're climbing ledges or battling a boss, the feedback has to be instinctive and immediate. We've changed the game to reduce the amount of button pressing

you have to do to move around the environment. For example, to climb a ladder on the PC, the

player had to stand in front of the ladder and press a button to mount it, then another button to climb. Now the player just walks into the ladder and Indy automatically mounts, climbs, and dismounts... no buttons, just the control stick.

SWG: Does the game contain any new features?

WC: Yeah. We've made some changes to reflect the play style of the N64. We've made it camera-relative (like Mario64) and added context-sensitive buttons on-screen, so the player will always know what a button press will do. Also, we've added a circle-strafe feature: When players have an enemy targeted, they can hold down the Z-trigger and circle the

enemy while keeping it targeted.

SWG: What was the rationale behind an N64 port?

WC: This game is a natural for a console. It has a great story in the Indiana Jones tradition. There's a lot of action in it, which is perfect for the N64. Also, there's not really a similar action/adventure title for this particular console.

SWG: How big is the Indy 64 team?

WC: There are currently only five people on the team: a production manager, two programmers, a level designer, and a part-time art tech. Factor Five supplied one of the programmers, Florian Sauer. Nick Pavis, the other programmer, and the rest of the team are from LEC. Despite the size of the team, they've done an amazing job. The work that the programmers have done is absolutely outstanding. They've managed to get this thing to run on an N64 and it looks beautiful. I really think it's one of the best-looking N64 games out there. That's not only a credit to our N64 programmers, but also to the original PC programmers, level designers, and artists.

SWG: Any tips for players?



▲ "Okay, don't panic. It's just a shark. Just float calmly and may-y-ybe he won't notice."

WC: Tread carefully! There are a lot of traps and enemies to deal with. Running around and rushing into rooms is dangerous. Try to pick off enemies from as far away as possible and use health kits only when necessary. ☒



▲ Crates. Why did it have to be crates?

ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND

Monkey Island: And Now for Something Completely Different

This Fall, LucasArts Entertainment wants you to grab a sword and defeat a host of evil enemies, but not as a Jedi.

In *Escape from Monkey Island*, the fourth installment in the *Monkey Island* series, players must lead scrawny pirate Guybrush Threepwood through a series of challenging puzzles to protect the Tri-Island Area from corporate greed. It's a daunting task: Guybrush isn't strong or skilled or particularly bright. And, as in past *Monkey Island* titles (*Secret of Monkey Island*, *Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge*, and *Curse of Monkey Island*), Guybrush is plagued by the evil zombie-ghost-demon pirate LeChuck. *Escape* marks the return of Guybrush, LeChuck, and many other characters from one of LEC's most popular franchises.

Thus far, details about *Escape from Monkey Island* have remained closely guarded mysteries, more difficult to uncover than the location of Lafitte's treasure. But *Star Wars Gamer* recently spoke with Project Leaders Sean Clark and Mike Stemmle to learn some of the game's

secrets. Clark and Stemmle, both LEC veterans, first worked together as Project Leaders on *Sam and Max Hit the Road*, a popular graphic adventure with a unique sense of humor and some very difficult puzzles. After pursuing other projects for a while, the pair has finally found themselves back together again, with *Monkey Island* at their fingertips.

Star Wars Gamer: First off...

Sean Clark: Should we apologize up front for a couple of the puzzles?

Mike Stemmle: We're sorry about the *Myst*es O' Tyme. It's cool but you're going to hate us.

SWG: Okay. Thanks. Now, can you give us a brief history on the *Monkey* series?

Mike: Ten years ago the company developed *Secret of Monkey Island*. It was a very clever and—for the time—pretty technologically advanced game. It introduced everyone to Guybrush Threepwood, the pirate hero who was in love with Elaine and antagonized by the ghost pirate LeChuck. A few years later came *Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge*. Guybrush was now

sporting a beard and searching for the treasure of BigWhoop. That was followed by *Curse of Monkey Island*. Once again, Guybrush defeated LeChuck. And, he also got the girl this time, finally marrying Elaine.

SWG: Why did the two of you decide to pick up the franchise?

Sean: It was a cross between company need and what we wanted to do. LEC definitely wanted to develop another humorous adventure title, and it



▲ Guybrush Threepwood wears a white shirt just like Luke.

was pointed out to us that Sam and Max is a perennial favorite. It's on everyone's Top 100 lists.

Mike: We figured that we could handle a *Monkey* title. The series has a style of humor that's similar to Sam and Max. There's the same kind of wackiness. Plus, it was enjoyable working on Sam and Max, and we wanted to repeat that experience.

SWG: Can you give us a brief synopsis of *Escape*?

Sean & Mike (in unison): Uhh...

Sean: I don't know... We've tried before...

Mike: Ummm... Let's see, Guybrush Threepwood makes the Caribbean safe for pirates by saving it from rapid gentrification.

SWG: So, this isn't a prequel?

Sean: No. Early on, we talked about that, actually.

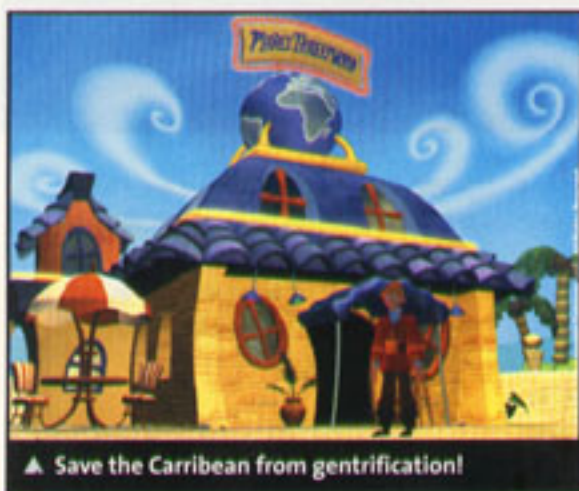
Mike: Then we realized that it wouldn't work at all. *Escape* picks up about three months after *Curse* ended. Guybrush and Elaine are returning from their honeymoon to discover that strange things are afoot on *Monkey Island*.

SWG: The previous titles were quite expansive. What's the scope of *Escape*?

Mike: It's bigger than anything you've ever seen in a *Monkey Island* game before.

Sean: We have well over 60 characters, and about 70 locations.

Mike: And there are around 9,000 lines of spoken dialogue. We've gotten wordier in our old age. There's a whole lot of inventory too. Probably about fifty or sixty items.



▲ Save the Caribbean from gentrification!



▲ Pirates hate little umbrellas in their drinks. Hate.

Sean: And there are three dimensions this time.

SWG: Why did you decide to make this a 3D graphic adventure?

Mike: First, Grim Fandango came out before we made the decision to do a Monkey IV, and everyone really liked it. Second, every Monkey Island game has had a different art style. The series has gone from the 16-color Guybrush Threepwood in Secret up through the beautifully drawn Threepwood of Curse. We figured that using a 3-D style similar to the art used in Grim would be part of the natural evolution of the series.

Sean: There are also some nice benefits to 3D. In 2D games, you have to draw the character from every angle. And every direction he walks has to be animated. In this case, we don't have to worry about that. We just build him once in 3D, texture map him to look nice, and then he rotates naturally and looks right from all angles. You can move the camera angle high or low, and he still looks great. We save a lot of time there, and it also gives us a lot more flexibility in the design.

Mike: We can do a lot more with quasi-cinematic angles in our sets without worrying about killing our poor animators.

SWG: Are you planning on including more monkeys as well?

Mike: We have more monkeys than you can shake a stick at. More monkeys than all three previous games combined. But you won't see them for awhile. That's one of our sub-plots: "Where Have All the Monkeys Gone?"

SWG: Is LeChuck the evil pirate coming back?

Mike: Yeah. But he's not the main villain. He's actually a flunkie.

SWG: What about Murray the talking skull?

Mike: We got Murray. Murray makes an extended cameo. He's not a major player in this game, but he's there.

SWG: How is Guybrush Threepwood similar to Luke Skywalker?

Mike: They both wear white shirts.

Sean: They're both whiny.

Mike: On the other hand, Guybrush never had the hots for his sister.

Sean: If I were to answer seriously, I'd say that they're both under-equipped heroes. They're essentially characters with a minimal amount of experience, and yet they both become heroes.

SWG: On the flip side of that, how is LeChuck like Darth Vader?

Sean: They're both bald.

Mike: Aside from that, and the really deep voice, they don't have much in common. Darth Vader has very sophisticated motivations. LeChuck's more of a force of nature.

Sean: An elemental.

Mike: He just wants to make everybody's life miserable. And to marry Elaine. That's pretty much it.

Sean: He's the same note over and over and over again.

Mike: Which works for about three games. With the fourth one, you realize that you need something on top of that, so we put in a new villain who has slightly more sophisticated motivations. The new guy basically wants to turn Tri-Island Area into a tourist trap.

SWG: Will Escape follow the tradition of including Star Wars in-jokes and references?

Mike: Yeah, we'll have a few. They'll be blatantly obvious. Most of them are in dialogue at this point.

Sean: But see if people can find the TIE fighter dog fight.

Mike: And the Yoda cloud formation.

[They're kidding]. Actually, there's an almost inside joke that was totally coincidental. One of our characters is named Ozzie Mandrill. "Ozzie" because he's Australian and "Mandrill" because it's a monkey reference. As it turns out, and we had no idea, but one of the Podracers is named Ody Mandrell. No one told us.

Sean: But we hope everyone will just think we're very clever.

SWG: You've both worked on totally original games in the past. How is working on a title that's part of a franchise different than creating an original game?

Mike: You have to be careful to appeal to the fans of the previous games. You couldn't turn Guybrush into a buff pirate all of a sudden. The fans would cry, "Where's my wimpy hero?" You have to take care to make sure that you stick with what people expect, while still trying to do something original and creative.

Sean: When you do your own game, you decide the tone, the style, the characters. It's a clean slate. When you pick up Monkey, the series already has a certain tone, a certain style, a specific sense of humor, a way the characters speak. You have to know all those details and be able to do it again, otherwise it's going to be horribly inconsistent.

Mike: And fans will crucify you.

SWG: Are you on schedule for a Fall 2000 release?

Mike: Pretty much, yeah. Strikingly, amazingly, efficiently, it's coming together. I have no idea how it's happening, but it is. It's all this team [which has peaked at around 40 people].

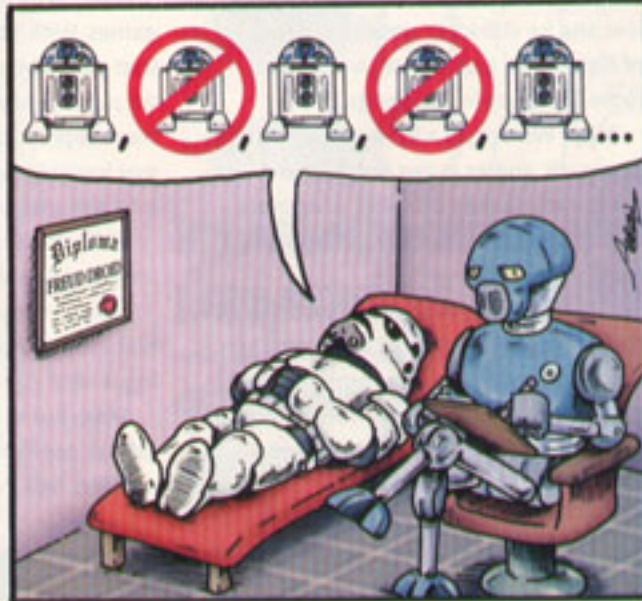
Sean: It's a very good, very dedicated team. As elements come into the game, they see it and become really enthusiastic. I think that's helped our schedule.

SWG: Any thoughts about the next Monkey?

Mike: Honestly, I haven't given much thought to it. I haven't given much thought to anything lately.

Sean: We don't have time.

Mike: I'd be open to it later. But first I'm going to finish this game, then I'm going on vacation. Somewhere without any monkeys. ☐



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Temporary Tattoo
(see directions on back)